University of Alberta

Difficulties in Translation of Sergei Dovlatov from Russian into English Language

by

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ABSTRACT

The study is based on three of Sergei Dovlatov's books and their translation into English: «Невидимая книга» (*The Invisible Book,* translated by Katherine O'Connor and Diana L. Burgin), «Компромисс» (*The Compromise*, translated by Anne Frydman), and «Чемодан» (*The Suitcase*, translated by Antonina W. Bouis).

Difficulties that translators encounter when working with Dovlatov's texts are viewed at the lexical, grammatical, textual, and pragmatic level. This study demonstrates that most of the difficulties can be overcome; however, each translator has employed different techniques and has chosen different strategies to represent Dovlatov's books in English. The translation of *The Invisible Book* is more source-text oriented, because it explains and clarifies cultural context. *The Compromise*'s translation appeals to readers' background knowledge. The translation of *The Suitcase* is more target-culture oriented without overloading readers with too many cultural references.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SL source language

ST source text

TL target language

TT target text

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Proper names and other Russian words appearing in the English section of the text are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sergei Dovlatov has been one of the most prominent authors among Russian readers for the last twenty years. His prose is marked by simple composition, clear narration, and honed language. His plots are simple, his style is straightforward, and his jokes are witty. His books accurately portray everyday life in the Soviet Union. Dovlatov's texts represent the fresh and unusual humour of an ordinary Soviet intellectual, and this makes them especially significant.

As Newmark points out, "the greater the quality of a language's resources expended on a text, the more difficult it is likely to be to translate, and the more worthwhile" (Newmark, 1988: 17). Thanks to his use of language and cultural allusions, Dovlatov's texts are interesting from not only a literary point of view, but from a translational point of view as well.

Dovlatov has been translated into English by several translators. Katherine O'Connor and Diana L. Burgin translated «Невидимая книга» *(The Invisible Book)* in 1979, Anne Frydman translated «Компромисс» (*The Compromise)* in 1983 and «Наши» (*Ours: a Russian Family Album)* in 1989, and Antonina W. Bouis translated «Чемодан» (*The Suitcase)* in 1990 and «Иностранка» (*A Foreign Woman)* in 1991. All these translators have employed different techniques and have chosen different strategies to represent Dovlatov's books in English.

This study aims to help non-Russian readers better understand Dovlatov's texts by providing important background and cultural information for the existing translations, each of which has its own peculiarities and, accordingly, presents Dovlatov differently. This study can also be used as a general tool for the translation of other texts

from Russian into English because it gives an analysis of the major problems of Russian-English translation.

The study is based on three of Dovlatov's books and their translation into English: «Невидимая книга» (*The Invisible Book)*, «Компромисс» *(The Compromise)*, «Чемодан» *(The Suitcase)*.

In order to clarify why the exploration of Dovlatov's texts and their translations are of interest, we should turn to the cultural context in which Dovlatov lived and created his works. Dovlatov was born in Ufa during the evacuation of Leningrad in 1941 and died in 1990 after immigrating to New York in 1978. He had lived in Leningrad since 1944, and it was there his talent as a writer was formed. Dovlatov studied at the Philological Faculty of Leningrad University, but was forced to leave the university because of poor marks. Afterwards he served as a military guard for two years in a strict security prison camp before working as a journalist for the newspaper «Адмиралтеец» (*Admiralteets*).

Dovlatov's writing career began in the early 1960s when he started to write short stories. This period in the USSR was characterized by a brief literary thaw, when the limits of what could be said in public were expanded. Books began to address conflicts faced by real human beings and to portray critical and poignant topics, which up until that time had been banned. In the 60s, a new generation of writers turned away from the heroic themes of socialist realism and moved toward personal lyric poetry and short stories. "Leningrad writers and poets of the sixties did not correspond to the image of the official Soviet writer. Instead, they challenge the image" (Pakhomova, 2001: 37). These new works implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) questioned the fundamental

tenets of communist ideology and celebrated private life and small virtues. In this period, a new generation of writers appeared, including Maramzin, Bitov, Brodsky, and, of course, Dovlatov. This generation was strongly influenced by American writers like Faulkner and Hemingway, and they accepted and advocated the idea of individualism and the principles of autonomous human existence, which was so relevant to the American state of mind. This American influence on Dovlatov can be seen in the way that he attempted to prioritize the sense of rhythm over purely ideological content (Genis, 2001: 86).

However, this period of thaw in the USSR soon came to an end. Even if some of the works of this generation of writers appeared in official literary magazines, most were ignored by official institutions. They could not be published in the Soviet Union and were circulated in manuscript copies, a phenomenon known as *samizdat* (self-publishing), or published abroad (*tamizdat*).

None of Dovlatov's books were published in the Soviet Union, except for two conventional stories about the working class, which stand out from his other works for their more 'Soviet' content, "По собственному желанию" (*By Personal Wish*) in 1973 and "Интервью" (*Interview*) in 1974.

Nevertheless, Dovlatov was recognized as a writer in unofficial literary circles. While writing for the official press, he circulated his stories first in *samizdat* and then in *tamizdat*, in the West. In 1978, Dovlatov immigrated to New York, and only after that did he become an officially published writer. In the USA, he worked as an editor-in-chief of a weekly newspaper for Russian immigrants, «Новый Американец» (*New American*), and his first published book, «Невидимая книга» (*The Invisible Book*),

appeared in 1978. Afterwards, several other novels and short stories, like «Компромисс» (*The Compromise)* in 1981, «Зона» (*The Zone)* in 1982, and «Наши» (*Ours)* in 1983 followed. In Russia, his works started to be printed in the magazines «Звезда» and «Октябрь» just at the end of 80s (Ar'ev, 2001: 43).

What was so controversial in his writings that required they be denied official status in the USSR? Dovlatov explains:

> Я не был антисоветским писателем, и все же меня не публиковали. Я все думал – почему? И наконец понял. Того, о чем я пишу, не существует. То есть в жизни оно, конечно, имеется. А в литературе не существует. Власти притворяются, что этой жизни нет. (Sukhikh, 1996: 358-359)
>
> *I was not an anti-Soviet writer, and still I was not published. I kept thinking – why? And finally, I understood. What I write about does not exist. That is, it certainly exists in reality. But does not exist in literature.The officials pretend that such life does not exist.*

Dovlatov's books reflect the Soviet era, particularly the 60-70s. However, instead of 'high-flown words' and a utopic vision of 'the bright future,' he describes everyday life. His main characters are outsiders and insignificant people (лишние люди). However, in contrast to the Russian tradition and, for example, novels and stories of Gogol and Dostoevskii, his characters, despite their hard life, never appear as tragic figures. Dovlatov manages to highlight the most insignificant words or events in a humourous way and give them a new dimension.

The writer himself liked to be compared only to Chekhov. He defined Chekhov as existing on the border between writer and storyteller. Understanding this distinction is the key to truly appreciating Dovlatov's prose. According to Dovlatov, a writer sets high moral goals, and shows how people should live. On the contrary, a storyteller just describes how people do live. Dovlatov referred to himself only as a storyteller. More than this, he showed his readers not only how they live, but also that "they do not know how to live" (Ar'ev, 2001: 35).

Dovlatov's prose is characterized by a rhythmic, laconic style, which makes him easy to read. His incredible sense of humour and his ability to use words in a most unexpected context makes him a joy to read, as if Dovlatov himself were reciting the story to you.

The Invisible Book was Dovlatov's first book to appear in English translation, and it concerns the author's struggle to publish his fiction in the Soviet Union.

The Compromise consists of twelve stories concerning the various ideological, professional and moral compromises that the author had to make during his work as a journalist in Estonia from November 1973 to October 1976. The book also makes serious points about the relationship between reality as it is and as it is reported. In the Soviet Union, reality was managed and constructed through a media that reveals to the public only what the Party wishes. The real stories behind the newspaper headlines are loaded with alcoholism, illicit sex, and unhappy families – but none of this was reported.

The set of stories in *The Suitcase* was first printed in 1986 in the emigrant magazine *The Hermitage*. The translation of the book appeared in 1990, at the same year

when *The Suitcase* was published in Russia. It was one of the first works to be officially published in the writer's homeland.

The Suitcase is organized around the articles of clothing in the single suitcase Dovlatov packed when he immigrated to New York City: a double-breasted suit, a poplin shirt, a winter cap, driving gloves, and other commonplace items. These items of clothing become mementos of life in the USSR. For example, the story about *The Finnish Crepe Socks* is connected with a shortage of "B group" goods (goods of light industry) and the pursuit of foreign wares. In the chapter "The Nomenclature Half Boots" (translation of Bouis) the author draws attention to Soviet mass-meetings at the opening of new constructions. 'Dangerous contacts with foreigners' and espionage are reflected in "A Decent Double-Breast Suit." Drinking bouts, warm, friendly company, and dissident actions are connected with "Fernand Leger's Jacket," "The Winter Hat," and "The Driving Gloves." Dovlatov the narrator uses these items of clothing "to reconstruct the world through which these items moved, and the world in which he once lived. He searches for their origin in his former life and home, reliving his past in an absurd Soviet reality" (Teplitz, 2003: 160-161).

It has been said that it is easy to translate Dovlatov. For example, Josef Brodsky was of this opinion, because Dovlatov's syntax "does not put a spoke in a translator's wheel" (Genis, «Довлатов и окрестности» (*Dovlatov and Environs*)).[1] Nevertheless, there are many other factors, beyond simple syntax that make a text more or less difficult to translate.

[1] http://www.svoboda.org/programs/cicles/dovlatov/dovlatov.12.asp

All of the stories and situations described by Dovlatov are very familiar to Russian readers who can identify with the life depicted in Dovlatov's books. Moreover, many readers can easily recognize themselves or their friends in the characters. This cultural context elicits a very strong emotional reaction that is probably not felt by non-Soviet readers. Dovlatov's texts are full of cultural allusions, humour, and comical situations – familiarity with his cultural context is necessary to fully understand his texts.

Translating Dovlatov is interesting because he employs language tools that do not have readily available equivalents, especially when he applies them to the cultural context, and because of his humourous tone of narration.

This thesis consists of two main parts. The first is aimed at providing theoretical background information for the analysis of the selected texts. This includes an overview of the theory of equivalence and its interpretation by some of the most innovative theorists in the field who explore strategies that can be applied to the analysis of translation. The peculiarities of translating fiction, and in particular prose, and the role of the translator will also be discussed. The last section of the first part outlines the difficulties of translation caused by the difference between Russian and English.

The second part of the study aims to analyse problems that a translator encounters when working with Dovlatov's texts at the lexical, grammatical, textual, and pragmatic level. This study does not provide a complete analysis of the translations but, instead, is focused on supplying diverse examples from Dovlatov's three books that demonstrate the type of difficulties translators have to overcome, the decisions they have to make, and how the theory of equivalence works in practice. I examine different

means of treating problems in translation including 1) the cultural implications of conducting a comparative analysis of source language (SL) and target language (TL); 2) examining the importance of overcoming the difficulties of transmitting culture into the target text (TT) through an analysis of the original texts; 3) analysing the author's intentions; 4) identifying and comparing strategies used by the translators of *The Invisible Book, The Compromise,* and *The Suitcase* (O'Connor and Burgin, Frydman, and Bouis, respectively); and 5) noting other translation methods when possible. At the same time, the emphasis of the thesis is on the nature of the strategies to which the translators resort, and, as such, my approach is more product-oriented.

2. THEORETICAL STUDIES ON TRANSLATION AND EQUIVALENCE

In order to provide an analysis of translation, a theoretical background in translation studies is necessary. I shall attempt to outline a method of translation with a focus on the theory of equivalence, which is one of the central problems in translation studies. The theory of equivalence helps to reveal problems with translating between languages without direct equivalents, and it can be used to develop strategies to deal with or to overcome these difficulties.

The Oxford English Reference Dictionary defines 'translation' as "a written or spoken rendering of the meaning of a word, speech, book, etc., in another language." Susan Bassnett-McGuire specifies that translation "involves the transfer of 'meaning' contained in one set of language signs into another set of language signs through competent use of the dictionary and grammar, and the process involves a whole set of extra-linguistic criteria also" (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980: 13). This definition makes translation related to semiotics.

B.P. Lawendowski also links translation with semiotics. He claims that translation represents the transfer of 'meaning' from one set of signs to another set of language signs "at the 'inter-social' level" (Lawendowski, 1978: 267).

Meanwhile, T.A. Sebeok perceives translation as an extension of the communication process "where one distinguishes an encoder who encodes a message and decoder who decodes that message, being familiar with the code, and belonging to the same speech community as the encoder" (Sebeok, 1967: 1107). In other words, the communication process involves someone who says or writes something in a given language and someone else who receives and understands the message in that same

language. But the process of translation is more complicated because of the difference between languages. Every language divides the continuum of the outside world into discrete units, and there is rarely, if ever, a one-to-one relationship of an item in language A with an item in language B. This causes the absence of direct equivalents on different language levels, and makes the process of translation more difficult.

Consequently, from the semiotic point of view, translation is an act or a process that is performed or occurs over and across systemic borders. "In the widest of its possible senses it is a series of operations, or procedures, whereby one semiotic entity, which is a [functional] constituent (element) of a certain cultural (sub)system, is transformed into another semiotic entity, which forms at least a potential element of another cultural (sub)system, providing that some informational core is retained "invariant under transformation," and on its basis a relationship known as "equivalence" is established between the resultant and initial entities" (Sebeok, 1967: 1112-1113).

According to Sebeok, semiotic entities of one system are more translatable or less translatable into another system under the postulate of maximal (or even optional) equivalence, rather than either translatable or non-translatable (Sebeok, 1967: 1115). It could be said that the task of the translator is to find a proper equivalent sign or set of signs in another language into which one may transfer the meaning of the source language's sign or set of signs.

The theory of equivalence is represented in translation studies quite broadly, and many different concepts of equivalence have been elaborated within this field. In this study, approaches to the theory of equivalence in relation to translation will be divided into two main groups: those that consider equivalence mainly a matter of linguistics, and

those that are based on two different cultures, i.e., one approach is more linguistically oriented (e.g., Jakobson, Catford, Nida), and another one is more culturally oriented (e.g., House, Emery). There are also other theorists who combine these two approaches; for example, Mona Baker views the equivalence at different levels. The classification of the difficulties in translation of Dovlatov is based on Baker's approach. However, other studies are also used in order to explain and specify some concepts and difficulties with the use of the correspondent terminology.

According to Roman Jakobson, "translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes" (Jakobson, 2000: 114). He distinguishes between three kinds of translation:

- Intralingual (within one language, i.e. rewording or paraphrase),
- Interlingual (between two languages),
- Intersemiotic (between sign systems).

Jakobson's study of equivalence introduces the notion of 'equivalence in difference.' He claims that, in the case of interlingual translation, the translator makes use of synonyms in order to get the ST message across. This means that in interlingual translations there is no full equivalence between code units. Jakobson's theory is essentially based on the semiotic approach to translation, according to which the translator must recode the ST message first and transmit it into an equivalent message for the TL audience.

Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet view equivalence as a translation procedure that "replicates the same situation as in the original, whilst using completely different wording" (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 342). In their opinion, the equivalence of the

texts depends on the equivalence of the situations, and two equivalent texts can use completely different stylistic and structural methods. They note that "the need for creating equivalence arises from the situation and it is in the situation of the SL text that translators have to look for a solution" (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 255). They also consider equivalence as the ideal method for the translation of idioms, proverbs, clichés, nominal or adjectival phrases, and the onomatopoeia of animal sounds. "Seen from the point of view of fixed expressions fitting equivalent situations, semantic equivalences can be recorded in glossaries as collections of gallicisms, idioms, proverbs, idiomatic expressions, etc." (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1995: 256).

John Catford defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL)" (Catford, 1965: 20). He determines that the term 'equivalent' is a key term for the process of translation, and the central problem of translation-practice is that of finding TL translation equivalents (Catford, 1965: 21).

In regards to translation equivalence, Catford distinguishes textual equivalence and formal correspondence. According to him, a textual equivalent "is any TL form (text or portion of text) which is observed to be the equivalent of a given SL form (text or the portion of text)" (Catford, 1965: 27). A formal correspondent is "any TL category which may be said to occupy, as nearly, as possible, the 'same' place in the economy of the TL as given SL category occupies in the SL" (Catford, 1965: 32).

As Catford claims, the formal correspondence requires some 'changes' or 'shifts' in the process of translation. He distinguishes level shifts and category shifts. By

a shift of level he means that a SL item at one linguistic level (e.g., grammar) has a TL translation equivalent at a different level (e.g., lexis) (Catford, 1965: 73).

Category shifts are divided into four types:

1. Structure-shifts, which involve a grammatical change between the structure of the ST and that of the TT;
2. Class-shifts, when a SL item is translated with a TL item that belongs to a different grammatical class, i.e., a verb may be translated with a noun;
3. Unit-shifts, that involve changes in rank;
4. Intra-system shifts, which occur when "SL and TL possess systems which approximately correspond formally as to their constitution, but when translation involves selection of a non-corresponding term in the TL system," for instance, when the SL singular becomes a TL plural (Catford, 1965: 80).

Catford also proposes very broad types of translation in terms of the following three criteria:

1. The extent of translation (full translation vs. partial translation);
2. The grammatical rank at which the translation equivalence is established (rank-bound translation vs. unbounded translation);
3. The levels of language involved in translation (total translation vs. restricted translation) (Catford, 1965: 21-26).

Eugene Nida also uses the linguistic approach to translation, but, in contrast to Catford, he is more interested in the fact that the message remains clear in the target text. Nida distinguishes formal and dynamic equivalence. He argues that "formal equivalence focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content" (Nida,

1965: 159). In the case of formal equivalence, "the message in the receptor culture is constantly compared with the message in the source culture to determine standards of accuracy and correctness" (Nida, 1965: 159). He also notes that such a translation would require numerous footnotes in order to make the text fully comprehensible. The search for a dynamic equivalent "aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behaviour relevant within the context of his own culture" (Nida, 1965: 159). Consequently, formal equivalence translation attempts to reproduce several formal elements, including grammatical units, consistency in word usage, and meanings in terms of the source context. Formal equivalence translation normally attempts to reproduce such expressions more or less literally. Dynamic equivalence focuses attention in the receptor response. Dynamic equivalence is defined by Nida as a translation principle according to which a translator seeks to translate the meaning of the original in such a way that the TL wording will trigger the same impact on the TL audience as the original wording did upon the ST audience.

Anton Popović's approach to equivalence demonstrates that the process of translation does not involve only the lexical and grammatical replacement of items between languages. Popović distinguishes four types of equivalence: linguistic, paradigmatic, stylistic, and textual. According to him, linguistic equivalence in translation represents "homogeneity of elements upon the linguistic (phonetic, morphological, and syntactic) levels of the original and the translation" (Popović, 1975: 6). He connects homogeneity on the linguistic level with determining equivalence on the expressive level of the text as well. In general, linguistic equivalence corresponds to word-for-word translation.

Paradigmatic equivalence, or grammar equivalence, refers to "equivalence of the elements of a paradigmatic expressive axis upon the stylistic level as a system of expressive elements" (Popović, 1975: 6). He notes that this type of equivalence is a hierarchically higher stylistic category than lexical synonymical equivalence.

Stylistic (translational) equivalence in translation stands for "functional equivalence of elements in both original and translation aiming at an expressive identity with an invariant of identical meaning" (Popović, 1975: 6).

Textual (syntagmatic) equivalence signifies an "arrangement of the elements upon the syntagmatic axis of the text which is conditioned by the expedient's expressive feeling, provided there is a freedom of choice of expressive means from the paradigmatic "stock" of style (expressive system)" (Popović, 1975: 6). Textual equivalence corresponds to the equivalence of form and shape.

A. Neubert moves further from linguistic approach to equivalence. He treats translation equivalence as a semiotic category, comprising a syntactic, semantic and pragmatic component. Neubert arranges these components in a hierarchical relationship, where semantic equivalence takes priority over syntactic equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence conditions and modifies both the other elements. According to Neubert, "equivalence overall results from the relation between signs themselves, the relationship between signs, what they stand for and those who use them" (in Bassnett-McGuire, 1980: 27).

Analysing different approaches to the theory of equivalence, Bassnett-McGuire concludes that equivalence in translation should not be approached as a search for sameness, since sameness cannot even exist between two TL versions of the same text,

let alone between the SL and the TL version. She notes that Popović's four types "offer a useful starting point" and Neubert's three semiotic components "point the way towards an approach that perceives equivalence as a dialectic between the signs and the structure within and surrounding the SL and TL texts" (Bassnett-McGuire, 1980: 29).

Newmark's major contribution to the theory of translation consists of a detailed treatment of semantic vs. communicative translation. According to him, semantic translation focuses primarily upon the semantic content of the source text. This type of translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original. Communicative translation focuses essentially on the comprehension and response of the receivers. Communicative translation attempts to produce for its readers an effect as close as possible to that produced on the readers of the original. In this case communicative effect coincides with the author's communicative intention.

To fulfil these types of translation, Newmark outlines some translation procedures the translator can use, which are:

1. Transference, which includes transliteration;
2. Naturalisation, which adapts words on phonetic and morphological levels;
3. Cultural equivalent, which is approximate translation where a SL cultural word is translated by a TL cultural word;
4. Functional equivalent, or the use of a culture-free word, sometimes with a new specific term;
5. Descriptive equivalent;

6. Synonymy, which is appropriate where literal translation is not possible and where the word is not important enough for componential analysis (Newmark, 1988: 81-84).

Newmark also notes that the translator's choice of strategy depends on several factors, such as the particular text-type, the requirements of the readership or the client (if s/he is an expert, an educated generalist, or an uninformed reader), and the importance of the cultural word in the text (Newmark, 1988: 119).

Another tool that is important in the process of translation, from Newmark's point of view, is componential analysis, is "a process of comparison of a SL word with a TL word which has a similar meaning, but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent, by demonstrating first their common and then their differing sense components" (Newmark, 1988: 114).

Juliane House sets up a model for assessing translation on the basis of pragmatic theories of language use that leads to semantic and pragmatic equivalence between ST and TT. She states that the basic requirements for equivalence of a given textual pair are that the "TT should have a function – consisting of two functional components, the ideational and the interpersonal – which is equivalent to ST's function, and that TT should employ equivalent pragmatic means for achieving that function" (House, 1977: 244). She also considers that a translation text should not only match its source text in function, but employ equivalent situational-dimensional means to achieve that function.

House distinguishes two types of translation: overt and covert. In an overt translation the TT audience is not directly addressed and therefore there is no need to attempt to recreate a 'second original' since an overt translation "must overtly be a

translation," which means that readers perceive overtly translated text as purely translation (House, 1977: 189). Covert translation, on the other hand, is the production of a text that is functionally equivalent to the ST. Covert translation is not particularly tied to the SL community and culture, and "an ST and its covert TT are pragmatically of equal concern for source and target language addressees" (House, 1977: 194).

Newmark's and House's approaches to translation are similar in the terms that they use to outline the difference between ST and TT oriented translation: ST oriented translation aims to explain the source text, while TT focuses more on the target audience.

The pragmatic approach to translation is described in detail by Peter Emery. He defines this process as "the rendering of an SL text's pragmatic meaning into a TL text in line with TL expectancy norms," where a text is the verbalized expression of an author's intention (Emery, 2004: 149). In conjunction with this definition, he treats the product of equivalence as "the notion of a TL text which purports to be a rendering of a particular SL text's pragmatic meaning" (Emery, 2004: 149). This allows him to view equivalence as a descriptive, general, product-oriented category. Interpretation of the text-producer's intention is considered to be a central concern in pragmatics.

Emery remarks that pragmatics evolved from Speech Act Theory and has generally focussed on the spoken mode of communication. During translation the translator must also detect and manipulate implicatures, which are "additional meanings behind face-value interpretation of utterances" (Emery, 2004: 151). The study of implicatures in pragmatics has been conducted by Emery in the framework of Speech Act theory and the Co-operative Principle (CP) with its four maxims of Quality,

Quantity, Relevance, and Manner. According to Emery, the translator should take into consideration such components of conversational implicatures (implicatures which are inferences through the receiver's world experiential knowledge) as follows:

– locutions,

– illocutions,

– implicatures,

– indirect illocutions,

– perlocutions,

– presuppositions.

Other features to which the translator must be sensitive, in both the interpreting and rendering parts of the translation process are conventional implicatures. They cover a broad range of textual and linguistic conventions and are classified as

A. Referential:

- reference
- intertextual allusions
- deixis

B. Language Code Discourse Conventions:

- cohesion (including repetition)
- naming conventions
- conventional structures
- tropic conventions

C. Informational:

- information loading

• thematization

• ordering strategies (Emery, 2004: 152).

Emery points out that in order to provide an ideal translation, the translator as an intertextual negotiator should have a profound awareness and understanding of both conversational and conventional implicatures in each of the two linguistic codes involved.

Baker explores the notion of equivalence at different levels in hierarchical order, in relation to the translation process. She includes different aspects of translation and combines the linguistic with the communicative approach. She offers a list of conditions upon which the concept of equivalence can be defined, and she distinguishes equivalence at word level and above word level, grammatical equivalence, textual equivalence, and pragmatic equivalence.

For Baker, equivalence at word level is the first element to be taken into consideration. When the translator starts analyzing the ST, s/he looks at the words as single units in order to find a direct 'equivalent' term in the TL. Baker notes that a single word can be assigned different meanings in different languages and might be regarded as being a more complex unit or morpheme. This means that the translator should consider such factors as number, gender, and tense. Baker points out that difficulties in translation arise from non-equivalence, or the lack of a direct equivalent in the target languages. She also outlines common problems of non-equivalence and strategies used by professional translators to solve these problems.

Grammatical equivalence refers to the diversity of grammatical categories and grammatical rules across languages. This diversity may be challenging for a translator

who is seeking a direct correspondence in the TL. Baker claims that different grammatical structures in the SL and TL may cause remarkable changes in the way that information or a message is transmitted. These changes may induce the translator either to add or to omit information in the TT because of the lack of particular grammatical devices in the TL itself except when they are felt to be relevant. Baker focuses on such grammatical categories as number, gender, person, tense and aspects, and voice.

According to Baker, the ultimate aim of a translator, in most cases, is to achieve a measure of equivalence at the text level, rather than at the word or phrase level. Textual equivalence refers to the equivalence between a SL text and a TL text in terms of information and cohesion. Baker analyses the interactional organization of sentences using a thematic structure and its elements, theme and rheme. She explores word order as a textual strategy and includes a number of ways in which the role of controlling information flow can be explained. She notes that texture is a very important feature in translation since it provides useful guidelines for the comprehension and analysis of the ST which can help the translator in his or her attempt to produce a cohesive text for the TL audience.

Pragmatic equivalence refers to the way utterances are used in communicative situations and the way they are interpreted in a given context. To explain pragmatic equivalence Baker uses two notions: coherence ("the network of conceptual relations which underline the surface text") and implicature (which is not about what is explicitly said but what is implied) (Baker, 1992: 217). Therefore, the translator needs to work out implied meanings in translation in order to convey the ST message. The role of the

translator is to recreate the author's intention in another culture in such a way that enables the TL reader to understand it clearly.

A translator's decision to maintain the cohesive ties and coherence of the SL text is usually guided by three main factors: the target audience, the purpose of the translation, and the text type.

Baker's approach to the problem of equivalence is viewed as the most constructive, as it includes the hierarchy of both linguistic and semantic/pragmatic levels of equivalence and reflects different approaches to equivalence. This approach is used as the basis of this study's structure for a description of translational difficulties in Dovlatov's texts.

Another problem in translation studies, which evolves from the question of equivalence, is (un)translatability. It usually arises when it is difficult to find a corresponding equivalent. Two general categories where untranslatability can appear are outlined by Catford. They are linguistic and cultural untranslatability. "In linguistic untranslatability the functionally relevant features include some that are in fact formal features of the SL text. If the TL has no formally corresponding feature, the text, or the item, is (relatively) untranslatable" (Catford, 1965: 94). Cultural untranslatability arises "when a situational feature, functionally relevant for the SL text, is completely absent from the culture of which the TL is a part" (Catford, 1965: 99).

However, recent theorists of translation presuppose that most texts are translatable. Even if something cannot be translated it can be explained (de Pedro, 1999: 556). For example, Sergei Vlakhov and Sider Florin described how "untranslatable

examples" can be transmitted into another language, and provided different equivalents to difficult linguistic and cultural samples and issues.

They considered such cultural and linguistic examples of untranslatability as realia, or culture specific concepts (geographical names, ethnographical names, relatives, coins, historical words, Soviet epoch words); phraseology, names, titles, onomatopoeia, dialects, common speech, slang, children's speech, mistakes in spelling and pronunciation, defects of speech, interspersed foreign words, sentences, terms, puns, abbreviation, and non-language elements (language of gestures). Strategies they offer to overcome these difficulties will be viewed in more detail in the next part of the study together with the analysis of Dovlatov's texts.

In this thesis, I assume that the principle that everything is translatable – insofar as it is always possible to find a suitable equivalent in the form of a synonym, description, paraphrasing or using other strategies – is correct. However, before the analysis of Dovlatov's texts can begin, some difficulties connected with the peculiarities of translating fiction and the role of the translator should be mentioned.

Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury theorize literature as a "polysystem" of interrelated forms and canons that constitute "norms" constraining the translator's choices and strategies. They also refer to translations as "facts of target culture; on occasion facts of a special status, sometimes even constituting identifiable (sub)systems of their own, but of the target culture in any event" (Toury, 1995: 29). Thus, according to Toury, the notion of translation in polysystem theory focuses on TT and TL, and translations are viewed as actual, non-normative textual-linguistic products "which belong first and foremost to the system of texts written in TL" (Toury, 1980: 35).

Even-Zohar states that translated literature is a system with its own rights, existing in varying relationships with original compositions. As such translation is an activity dependent on the relations within a certain cultural system. Translation can occupy a "central" or "peripheral" position in a TL. In the second case, translated literature "is modelled according to norms already conventionally established by an already dominant type in the target literature" (Even-Zohar, 2000: 195). Even-Zohar also mentions that when translated literature occupies a peripheral position, it behaves in an entirely different way. "Here, the translator's main effort is to concentrate upon finding the best ready-made secondary models for the foreign text, and the result often turns out to be a non-adequate translation or [...] a greater discrepancy between the equivalence achieved and the adequacy postulated" (Even-Zohar, 2000: 197).

Toury considers equivalence as a functional-relational concept, and, distinguishes between the potential and realised (actual) equivalence. According to him, potential equivalence does exist between an assumed translation and its assumed source and represents the entire set of possible relations. Potential equivalence belongs to the theoretical branch of the discipline, "whereas the proper place of any actual (or realized) equivalence would be in Descriptive Translation Studies" (Toury, 1995: 86). This allows him to introduce equivalence as a theoretical term ($equivalence_1$) and a descriptive term ($equivalence_2$). This study's analysis of examples of translation from Dovlatov's works involves a discussion of the $equivalence_2$. In order to follow this notion I employ terminology used by Osadnik to distinguish strong, weak, and zero equivalence (S/E, W/E and 0/E). "The notion of a strong equivalence is also known in logic and logical semiotics as a distributional equivalence, which means that two or

more elements occur in the same range of contexts. If they have no contexts in common they are in complimentary relationship, which implies that we are dealing with a case of zero equivalence. Between the two extremes there are two kinds of partial equivalence, namely, the distributional inclusion and an overlapping distribution which function as a weak equivalence" (Osadnik, 1994: 36).

Overall, translating fiction is probably one of the most difficult types of translation because it requires significant background knowledge and creativity. Literary translation can also be presented as a process that creates a text similar to the original, but one that is created in a different cultural context and meets different literary-communicative requirements. In this case, the literary translation is a variety or type of interpretation of the original text (Kazakova, 2002: 7-12).

The translation of fiction involves several factors that can appear difficult to work with. First, capturing the author's individual style, which can be determined by his or her outlook, literary school, diversity of lexical and grammatical language means, or stylistic diversity, is no easy task. Second, it can be difficult to reproduce the rhythm of the prose and punctuation as a factor of the semantic and structural division of a text.

Along with figurativeness, fiction also possesses 'semantic capacity' (семантическая ёмкость). This characteristic shows the ability of a writer to say more than the direct meaning of words can express. The writer makes the readers' thoughts, feelings, and imagination do the work. As Fedorov writes, "semantic capacity becomes apparent in forms of realistic typification, or in allegoric circumlocution. One more feature of fiction is pronounced national slant of content and form. Fiction is also connected with historical environment" (Fedorov, 2002: 335-336).

The content of the book can influence not only the consciousness of the reader, but also the feelings that are caused by the stylistic connotation, combination, or order of words (Fedorov, 2002: 338).

Usually fiction is characterized by a national undertone (Fedorov's term национальная окраска). This feature can be expressed through literary and idiomatic images, which reflect material culture and social conditions of life. National undertone complicates the task of the translator, because it is perceived by ST readers as something usual, habitual and natural.

Fedorov considers the translation of national undertone to be closely related to a) the degree of fidelity of translation of artistic images dependant on semantic and grammar; and b) the type of languages tools used in translation (Fedorov, 2002: 382).

Thus in dealing with literary translation, the translator should determine the text's intention and then consider the way it is written before identifying unique and recurrent problems and selecting a suitable translation method. When considering a text for translation, one must ask for whom the original text was intended and whether this readership corresponds to the potential TT reader. Kate James distinguishes the ST ideal reader and TT ideal reader. She also outlines what kind of factors should be taken into account while determining SL ideal readers: historical events or certain cultural familiarity with customs; memories of certain experiences; certain opinions, preferences and prejudices; and a certain level of linguistic competence. The translator, on the other side, should construct the image of an ideal TT reader who can have similar academic, professional and intellectual levels as the original reader, but probably significantly different textual expectations and cultural knowledge.

A translator should be aware of the author's purpose of introducing specific elements into the text, and the significance of figurativeness and different literary devices. A translator has to be careful to preserve certain cohesive effects as well.

Finally, a target text should convey the same information as the source text and produce the same impact on the receptor as does the source text. "To get full information from the text, the receptor must have adequate background knowledge. This knowledge may not be enough if the receptor is not well acquainted with the source language culture. New realia, habits and customs are usually commented upon by a translator" (Proshina, 1999: 196-197).

So, in order to provide a better translation it is necessary to have background knowledge: sociocultural information that is typical for the nation, developed by the nation, and reflected in a language of the nation that expresses the life of the country and its people.

Three main conditions of literary translation are summed up by T.A. Kazakova:

- the translator reproduces not just language signs but their separate and combined artistic functions,
- the process of translation involves understanding of the meaning, i.e. the system of artistic images and language means,
- the purpose of translation (Kazakova, 2002: 16).

In Klemensiewicz's words, "the task of the translator consists of neither reproducing, nor transforming the elements and structures of the original, but in grasping their function and introducing such elements and structures of his own

language that could, as far as possible, be its substitutes and equivalents of the same functional coherence and efficiency" (in Osadnik, 1994: 30).

Beside difficulties caused by a fiction translation, there are more objective difficulties a translator may encounter, such as those caused by the linguistic differences between Russian and English.

The Russian language is referred to as a synthetic language, and English is an analytical language. Russian has a very broad system of endings that allows for syntactical relations within a sentence to be expressed. Russian word order is generally described as fairly free and English word order as fixed. However, Russian word order is governed by a set of rules that allows for considerable variation depending on emphasis, emotion, tone, and style of the speaker. Non-neutral word order stresses the semantic importance of one or another part of a sentence. English fixed word order has fewer possibilities for the kind of inversion made possible by Russian case endings.

Russian has categories that are missing in English, such as cases, verbal aspect, and a broad system of prefixation, but lacks articles and a complex tense system. The historical present, omission of the verb in Russian, adjectives that stand for nouns, diminutives, and personal pronouns represent other common problems of Russian-English translation.

In the next section, I shall describe suggested strategies on how to overcome only those difficulties of Russian-English translation, that arise in translating Dovlatov's *The Invisible Book, The Compromise,* and *The Suitcase*.

Thus, the analysis of the translation of Dovlatov's *The Suitcase* is based on Baker's hierarchical approach to the problem of equivalence. First, the challenge of

finding equivalents at word level is analysed. Second, equivalence on a grammatical level is based on the different grammatical categories of Russian and English. Thirdly, textual equivalence in terms of cohesion is examined, and, finally, pragmatic equivalence is assessed, taking into consideration Dovlatov's style, the 'hidden' meaning of his phrases, potential readers' reaction, and the humour of his books. I also consider what kind of information the translator should possess in order to understand Dovlatov's texts and make them understandable to target language readers.

All the difficulties in translation can also be conditionally divided into objective difficulties, connected with the difference between Russian and English, and subjective difficulties caused by Dovlatov's style. Equivalence at word level and grammatical equivalence represent objective difficulties, while textual and pragmatic equivalence are more subjective. However, it is difficult to classify purely objective and subjective difficulties as the lexicon and grammar used by Dovlatov reflects his style and manner of writing, and the cohesive means and implicatures he uses are connected with the intricacies of the Russian language.

3. ANALYSIS OF DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATION OF DOVLATOV

3.1. Word equivalence

When a translator starts working with a text, s/he is first looking for an equivalent for particular words and elements with specific meanings. Translating at the word level becomes more challenging when there is no one-to-one correspondence between orthographic words and elements of meaning within or across languages. In Dovlatov's books, this is most problematic in the translation of different cultural references, proper names, colloquial speech and slang, all of which do not have direct equivalents in English. These types of difficulties are well known in translation studies. For each type, I shall provide alternative translation methods – using examples drawn from Dovlatov's texts – that have been presented by different scholars and translators.

All examples are combined into groups according to their semantic similarities. This type of classification is more suitable for the comparison of diverse strategies offered by different translators.

3.1.1. Cultural references (realia)

Cultural references, or realia, constitute an acute problem of translation because they signify certain objects, concepts, or phenomena that convey a distinctive national character and therefore exist only in the language of that nation.

Translation theorists broadly discuss the problem of finding equivalents for cultural references and offer different strategies that can then be used by translators. Lauren Leighton states that "informed modern translators seem to deal in two ways with realia. Adherents of the faithful translation prefer not to resort to anything that approaches scholarliness. They transliterate when realia resist conveyance out of

cultural milieu, something inserting an elaboration or gloss, something obliging the reader to deal with meaning and cultural implication by deciphering the context." On the other hand, translators may convey a realium by resorting to "calque, adaptation, approximation or description" (Leighton, 1991: 226).

Andrei Fedorov names several ways to translate specific words that describe cultural references:

1) transliteration or transcription,

2) the creation of a new word on the basis of the grammar rules of the target language,

3) the usage of a TL word that is close in meaning and function to a word in the SL,

4) hiponymical, when a word in the SL is translated by a generic word in the TL. (Fedorov, 2002: 207).

Fedorov also notes that usually all types of translation can be used and combined in practice (Fedorov, 2002: 214).

According to Vlakhov and Florin, the best solution in translation is made when realia are introduced in a TT naturally and do not require any additional specific literary devices and means (Vlakhov and Florin, 1980: 81). They offer the following scheme to transfer realia into a TL:

I. Transcription

II. Translation

1) Neologism:

a) calque

b) semi-calque

c) assimilation

d) semantic neologism

2) Approximate translation:

a) generalization,

b) functional analogue,

c) description, explanation

3) Contextual translation (Vlakhov and Florin, 1980: 93).

Dovlatov's texts contain several culturally specific words and notions. For example, in *The Suitcase* the author uses the word '*богатырь*,' which means epic hero or strong man. The translator in this case adverts to mythology and uses another name for hero: '*Hercules.* ' This functional analogue is clearer for English speaking readers than the Russian '*богатырь.* '

A functional analogue is also used for the translation of '*двоечник*':

Тундру за кулисами изображал *двоечник* Прокопович.

(«Чемодан», 141)

The tundra was played backstage by *D-student* Prokopovich.

(*The Suitcase*, 115)

In the Russian educational system the failure mark is 'two' ('*двойка*), so the person who constantly gets these marks is called '*двоечник*'.. The equivalent mark in the English educational system is D, so the translator uses the variant, which is clear to the English-speaking reader. This example represents strong equivalence, because both

Russian and English words have very similar meaning and can be used in similar contexts.

The next example is:

(...) и был назначен *Дедом Морозом* («Чемодан», 142).

(...) they asked me to play old *Grandfather Frost* (*The Suitcase*, 115).

Grandfather Frost is a folklore personage, and he is known to a wider range of readers than is '*bogatyr.*' That is, probably, why the translator calqued the Russian name 'Дед Мороз' and presented it as 'Grandfather Frost.' It also helps to maintain cultural difference and to alert readers to cultural attributes.

Another example involves the name of a specific Russian card game

Чурилин играл в *буру* с тремя другими узниками. («Чемодан», 79)

Churilin was playing 'bura' with three other prisoners.

Churilin was playing *cards* with three other prisoners. (*The Suitcase*, 63)

In order to translate 'бура', which is the name of the card game, the translator employs a generalization and resorts to a weak equivalent 'play cards.' 'Бура'does not have any direct equivalents available in Russian-English dictionaries. However, in order to transmit the function of this word, the translator uses a general notion, and thus, overcomes a relative lack of specificity in the target language compared to the source language.

In *The Suitcase*, Russian food is mentioned:

Угостят тебя домашними *пельменями* (...) («Чемодан», 49)

They'll give you homemade *pelmeni*. (*The Suitcase*, 39)

The word 'pelmeni' is written in the translation in italics. '*Пельмени*' are a Russian type of ravioli. Transliteration presents the Russian national item to TT readers, and this technique serves the purpose of acquainting the reader with cultural information. However, the translator does not always follow this strategy. For the next example Bouis substitutes the old Russian jelly-like liquid food '*кисель*' («Чемодан», 77) with a functional analogue '*pudding*' (*The Suitcase*, 62). The difference between these two strategies can be explained by a higher degree of awareness with '*пельмени*' than with '*кисель.*'

Cultural references are present not only in *The Suitcase,* but also in *The Compromise*. For example, Dovlatov mentions '*балалайка,*' a Russian folk instrument. The translator, Frydman, transfers the notion from one language into another using transliteration:

> Балалайка («Компромисс», 38) – balalaika (*The Compromise,* 45).

In *The Suitcase,* Dovlatov inserts into the text a historical notion:

> Домработнице следовало бы любить меня. Любить как социально близкого. Симпатизировать мне как *разночинцу*. («Чемодан», 87)
>
> *The housekeeper should have liked me. Have liked me as a socially close one. Have sympathized with me as a raznochinets.*

'*Raznochinets*' was a term applied in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to people of various classes, or to those who left their hereditary social station without formerly entering another legal class. More specifically, in Russian literature the term refers to members of the lower social strata, such as peasants and priests' sons, who took

leading roles in the provincial intelligentsia.[2] Dovlatov uses this term to emphasize the social status of the character, his simplicity and social closeness to the housekeeper. In Bouis's translation we find

> The housekeeper should have liked me for being closer to her socially. She should have felt sympathy for me as a *classless intellectual*. (*The Suitcase*, 70)

The translator uses the description as a strategy to introduce the idea of the historical notion. However, the translation of '*raznochinets*' as '*classless intellectual*' accentuates different meanings of the word and creates a larger difference between a housekeeper and an intellectual, or a person of great intellect ability, than appears in the original Russian text. On the contrary, the notion of 'classless intellectual' increases the social distance between characters and does not make them closer as Dovlatov intends to point out. This example presents weak equivalence, when a TL word and its context correspond with a SL word and its meaning only partially.

Thus culturally specific words and notions from Dovlatov texts are transferred into the TL in different ways. Translators use such strategies as transliteration, calque, functional analogues, generalization and description: the translator's choice often depends on the degree of the target readers' awareness of particular Russian cultural notions.

3.1.2. Proper names

As Newmark considers, in translating proper names, where connotations and nationality are significant, the best method is first to translate the word that underlines

[2] http://www.myriobiblos.gr/texts/english/florovsky_ways_chap5notes.html

the SL proper name into the TL, and then to naturalise the translated word back into a new SL proper name – but normally only when the character's name is not yet current amongst an educated TL readership (Newmark, 1988: 215).

In *The Suitcase* Dovlatov uses nicknames with criminal connotation:

> Какие люди были – *Сивый, Мотыль, Паровоз*!.. («Чемодан», 144)
>
> What great people – *Lefty, One-eye, Diesel*! (*The Suitcase*, 117)

The translational method employed in this example for translation of *Мотыль* and *Паровоз* is a functional equivalent: the translator used nicknames that have a connotation of belonging to a lower class. This is a case of zero equivalence. *Lefty* is a real nickname, thus it is a case of a strong equivalence.

In *The Suitcase,* a reference to a literary character can be found as well:

> Ты должен найти современного русского умельца, потомка знаменитого Левши. Того самого, который подковал английскую блоху. И сделать на эту тему материал. («Чемодан», 50)
>
> *You need to find a modern Russian handy-man, the descendant of famous Levsha. The very guy, who shod the English flea. And do the article on the topic.*

Levsha is a principle character of a Russian story written by Leskov. This story is studied in literature classes at Russian schools, and Levsha is very well known to ST readers. However, this handy-man Levsha is not at all familiar to most English-speaking readers, so the following translation is given:

> You have to find a modern Russian handy-man. And do an article on him. (*The Suitcase*, 40)

The problem in this example arises from a lack of familiarity with literary references. As such, Bouis employs the technique of omission.

Literary references are used in *The Compromise* as well:

> Хлестаков был с Пушкиным на дружеской ноге…
>
> («Компромисс», 14)
>
> *Khlestakov was on an intimate footing with Pushkin.*

This reference to a literary character is not accidental. Dovlatov reflects upon the lie in modern society. Khlestakov is an example from the nineteenth century and is used for a comparison with modern "lie" and "liars." Khlestakov is a character from Gogol's comedy *Revizor* (*The Inspector General*). He finds himself stranded in a small provincial town. By mistake he is taken by the local officials to be a government inspector who is visiting their province incognito. Khlestakov happily adapts to his new role and exploits the situation. To create an impression and fulfil his role, he boasts that he knows very important personalities in Petersburg, and in particular, Pushkin, the most popular Russian poet of that time.

Frydman translates this sentence in the following way:

> Gogol's Khlestakov boasted that he was on friendly terms with Pushkin … (*The Compromise*, 14)

The translator specifies that Khlestakov is Gogol's character and that he was lying. But she does not provide any further explanations about what kind of character he was, or how he benefited from lying about his acquaintances and status. The translator assumes the readers' knowledge of the comedy and their familiarity with the character. It is possible that readers are familiar with this comedy, as it is translated into English.

Translators of *The Invisible Book* demonstrate another way of dealing with Dovlatov's literary references. The titles of two chapters refer to Russian fictional characters. In both cases, translators use detailed footnotes to explain these references and Dovlatov's intentions of using them:

> «Помесь Мышкина с Ноздревым» («Невидимая книга», 42) – A Mixture of Myshkin and Nozdrev (*The Invisible Book,* 58).
>
> Footnote: Prince Myshkin is the hero of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*, an incarnation of a "positively beautiful soul." Nozdrev is the name of the notorious liar and entirely "unbeautiful" braggart in Gogol's *Dead Souls*. Dovlatov is thus suggesting by way of these contrastive literary references that the port Okhapkin possesses a singularly ambivalent nature.
>
> «Прекрасная Эллен» («Невидимая книга», 61) – Beautiful Helene (*The Invisible Book,* 84).
>
> Footnote: The title of this chapter, "Beautiful Helene," suggests the recurring Homeric epithet used by Tolstoi in *War and Peace* to characterize the soulless beauty, Elena Kuragina. It turns out to be a rather ironic allusion, however, since the Helene in Dovlatov's life, although very attractive, is beautiful to him mainly in a spiritual sense (because of her love of the Russian language), whereas Elena Kuragina, as well as her prototype, Helen of Troy, is totally lacking spiritual beauty.

Another type of the proper names used by Dovlatov is the names of different commercial products and goods. Bouis's translation of *The Suitcase* opts for the strategy of generalization in order to transfer these items:

> Чурилин принес бутылку «*Московской*». («Чемодан», 68)
>
> Churilin brought back a bottle of *Moskovskaya vodka*. (*The Suitcase*, 54)
>
> Что можно сказать охраннику, который *лосьен «Гигиена»* (lotion *Hygiene*) употребляет только внутрь?.. («Чемодан», 74)
>
> What do you say to a guard who uses *after-shave* only internally? (*The Suitcase*, 59)
>
> Я отдал ему «*Беломор*». («Чемодан», 79)
>
> I gave him the *cigarettes*. (*The Suitcase*, 63)

These changes make the text clearer to the English readers. The translator uses classifiers to specify what kind of goods those names refer to. This type of translation appears to be more target-language and target-culture oriented.

To compare, the same name of cigarettes *Belomor* is mentioned in *The Invisible book*, and are translated as

> Выкурил две пачки «*Беломора*». [NK, 61]
>
> (...) and smoked two packs of *White Sea Canal Cigarettes*. [83]

The brand of cigarettes *Belomor* has an additional connotation: they are the cheapest cigarettes, but none of the translations reflect this meaning.

The Suitcase is full of toponymic references. Dovlatov mentions Leningrad streets, restaurants, and stores. According to Newmark, transcription is usually used

when translating proper names and addresses (Newmark, 1981: 154). Fedorov also notes that there is a tendency to transliterate more famous geographic names and translate local names such as names of streets (Fedorov, 2002: 215).

The translator of *The Suitcase* uses a common strategy of transliteration to deal with the names of Leningrad streets, stores, and restaurants. For example,

> Мы прошли три квартала до ресторана «*Чайка*». («Чемодан», 14)
>
> We walked three blocks to the *Chaika* restaurant. (*The Suitcase*, 9)

> Окна выходили на *Фонтанку*. («Чемодан», 139)
>
> (*Fontanka* is the street's name)
>
> The windows opened onto the *Fontanka*. (*The Suitcase*, 113)

> Мы поехали в *Гостинный Двор*. («Чемодан», 130)
>
> (*Gostinnyi Dvor* is the name of the big store, which is located in the centre of Leningrad/St. Petersburg on Nevsky Prospect)
>
> We went to *Gostinny Dvor*. (*The Suitcase*, 104)

Dovlatov often alludes to his personal writing experience, so he often mentions the names of different periodicals. And, as Newmark states, titles of newspapers, periodicals, books, plays, films, articles, papers, and works of art are usually transliterated (Newmark, 1981: 154). In *The Suitcase*, however, the translator uses different strategies. In the following examples, names of newspapers are translated:

> Читал я твою юмореску в «*Аврore*». («Чемодан», 107)
>
> I read your humour piece in *Aurora*. (*The Suitcase*, 86)

Я представлял газету «*Турбостроитель*». Шлиппенбах – ленфильмовскую многотиражку под названием «*Кадр*».

(«Чемодан», 136)

I represented *Turbobuilder*, and Filimonov was there from an engineering paper called *Structure*. (*The Suitcase*, 111)

У двери висела стенная газета – «*Ленин и здравоохранение*».

(«Чемодан», 65)

A newspaper hung on the wall by the door *Lenin and Health*.

(*The Suitcase*, 52)

Lenin and Health however, is a different type of newspaper. It is a wall newspaper, which was compiled by the staff themselves and was not a periodical edition. These types of newspapers were very common for Soviet organizations: the information they contained always concerned politics and promoted the progress and success of every field as per communist ideology.

The same strategy of translation is used by Frydman in *The Compromise* and by translators of *The Invisible Book*:

«Советская Эстония» («Компромисс», 8) – *Soviet Estonia* (*The Compromise*, 5); «Молодежь Эстонии» («Компромисс», 11) – *Estonian Youth* (*The Compromise*, 10); «На страже Родины» («Компромисс», 7) – *On Watch for the Motherland* (*The Compromise*, 3).

«Костер» - *Bonfire*, «Детгиз» - Children's Press, «Аврора» - *Aurora*, «Советский писатель» - Soviet Writer Publishing House, «Звезда» - *The Star* («Невидимая книга», 84) – (*The Invisible Book,* 113-114)

In addition to the translation of newspaper titles, Bouis also employs other techniques. For example, for the magazine *«Огонек»* (*Light*), the general translation as a local newspaper is offered:

Пересмотрю семьсот номеров журнала «*Огонек*». («Чемодан», 16)

Leaf through seven hundred issues of the *local newspaper*.

(*The Suitcase*, 11)

In this way the translator does not overload the text with strange names for English readers and, instead, is focused more on the target audience.

Thus for the translation of proper names, translators use such strategies as functional equivalents, omissions, footnotes, and generalizations. The cited examples also demonstrate that translators are very consistent regarding these chosen strategies of translation. For example, all of them tend to translate and not transliterate names of periodicals, which is different from the strategy mentioned by Newmark. It is also interesting to notice that translators treat literary references in different ways. The cited examples reveal that Bouis tends to use omission, that Frydman attempts to incorporate explanations into the text, and that the translators of *The Invisible Book* employ footnotes with detailed descriptions of the mentioned characters and fiction.

3.1.3. Abbreviations

In Dovlatov's books there are several acronyms and abbreviations. Abbreviations present common problems for translation. Vlakhov and Florin state that

there are two main ways of dealing with abbreviations: translation and transliteration. In both cases abbreviations can be transferred as a full name or as an abbreviation. The most common technique used by Dovlatov's translators is translation into a full name. For example,

> ГАИ («Компромисс», 20) – State Automobile Inspection Office (*The Compromise,* 21); БАМ («Компромисс», 33) – Baikal-Amur Main Line (*The Compromise,* 39); СНО («Компромисс», 88) – Student Scientific Society (*The Compromise,* 98).

ВЛКСМ is translated by two different translators as

> ВЛКСМ («Компромисс», 87) – Komsomol Committee (*The Compromise,* 98)
>
> ЦК ВЛКСМ («Невидимая книга», 85) – the Central Committee of the All-Union Leninist Communist Youth League (*The Invisible Book,* 115)

However, there are some variations in translation strategies as well. In *The Invisible Book,* ОВИР («Невидимая книга», 85) is translated as the full name, the Visa and Registration Department (*Invisible Book*, 115). However, in *The Suitcase* the same word is transliterated as OVIR (*The Suitcase*, 3).

Another abbreviation in *The Invisible Book* is transliterated and explained in a footnote:

> ОБХС («Невидимая книга», 82) – OBKhSS (*The Invisible Book,* 110). Footnote: OBKhSS is the acronym for *Otdel bor'by s khishchenien sotsialisticheskoi sobstvennosti* (Department for the Struggle Against the

Misappropriation of Socialist Property), an investigatory agency dealing with economic crimes such as extortion, bribery, etc.

All of the offered ways for translation of abbreviations are acceptable and are more target-culture oriented. The translations of the given abbreviations are quite self-explanatory except Bouis's transliteration of *OVIR*, which requires readers to have background knowledge of the organization and an understanding of what the letters stand for.

3.1.4. Obscenities, slang, colloquial speech

Many scholars agree that slang, jargon, and dialects present a difficult problem for translators. Authors frequently use syntactic or intonational devices to approximate the quality of oral narration. According to Rachel May, "intonation patterns in oral language are perceived largely subconsciously and vary greatly from language to language," and writing systems do not reflect them well (May, 1994: 79). The difficulty in translating colloquial speech arises from the need to transmit connotations. In addition to that, a translator should also precisely understand the connotation of the SL word or expression.

As Leighton remarks, "literary works laden with slang or dialects are often conveyed with standard words – the device called blandscript – and an occasional attempt at substitution" (Leighton, 1991: 120).

In *The Suitcase,* there is an example of prisoners' slang:

Зек удивился по-лагерному:

-Что за *шухер* на *бану*? («Чемодан», 71)

In prisoner's slang *'шухер'* means 'quarrel, or scandal', and *'бан'* means 'station or bazaar'. In standard language, the expression means, "What's going on?" The difficulty of this passage is in finding an equivalent word form in English prisoners' slang.

The translational strategy employed in this example maintains the informal tone in the translation by using a functional analogue:

> "The prisoner reacted in camp idiom. "What the fuck?"
>
> (*The Suitcase*, 57)

In *The Suitcase*, Dovlatov also uses such colloquial words as *'кочумать'*,which means 'to do nothing, to take a break, be quiet,' and *'волочь,'* which means 'to understand.' Bouis transfers them as *'screw around'* and *'dig,'* saving the conversational style of the text. The difficulty of translating such words and expressions consists of being familiar with Russian slang and all the connotations of its meanings.

Colloquial words are used in *The Compromise* as well, and the translator finds equivalents for them:

> Алкаш («Компромисс», 37) – Guzzler (*The Compromise*, 43).

In the next example, the translator substitutes the word *'ханыга'*, which is used for a degraded person, with the expression *'God knows what'* saving the implication:

> - Назовешь Володей, - разглагольствовал Кузин, - а получится *ханыга*. («Компромисс», 37)
>
> "We would call him Volodya," Kusin proposed, "and get *God knows what*." (*The Compromise*, 43)

This is an example of weak equivalence where the meaning is transmitted by idiom, and both examples from ST and TT have similar connotations.

Another word that does not have a direct equivalent is '*зюзя*' in the example:

Чурилин упился, как *зюзя* («Чемодан», 80).

This is an idiomatic expression for getting extremely drunk. The translator offers the equivalent expression:

Churilin got as drunk as a *skunk* (*The Suitcase*, 64).

According to Baker's classification, this is an example of above the word level equivalence where a translator has to find models to render collocations, idioms, and fixed expressions.

When searching for an equivalent at word level, the translator is often looking for a direct equivalent that is available in the dictionary. The difficulty arises when no direct equivalents exist. In Dovlatov's texts, most words that do not have direct equivalents involve cultural references. The translator has to decide to what extent the SL culture should be represented in the TT.

Translators of Dovlatov's books use different strategies to find word equivalents. For example, Bouis and Frydman use transliteration for some cultural references: Bouis often tries to find functional equivalents, while the translators of *The Invisible Book* incorporate footnotes.

The best solution for finding word equivalents is probably a combination of several strategies like transliteration, functional analogue, description, omission, or footnote. A multi-strategic approach preserves the foreign nature of the text and introduces new cultural notions to TT readers. At the same time, it does not overload the text with footnotes and excessive foreign elements that could make the text difficult to understand.

3.2. Grammatical equivalence

Grammar is "the set of rules which determine the way in which units such as words and phrases can be combined in a language and the kind of information which has to be made regularly explicit in utterances" (Baker, 1992: 83). Baker also mentions that the most important difference between grammatical and lexical choices, as far as translation is concerned, is that "grammatical choices are largely obligatory while lexical choices are largely optional" (Baker, 1992: 84). Usually in translation it is more difficult to find grammatical equivalents because grammatical rules are more resistant to manipulation by speakers. Differences in the grammatical structures of the source and target language often result in changes in the information content of the message during of translation.

There is an opinion in translation studies that equivalents at grammatical levels should be found if the element is important for the understanding of the text. According to Fedorov, "reproduction of the grammatical form is not the aim of translation. The aim of translation is to express the idea in general. Only in case if grammatical forms have their own stylistic role in the original text (laconic brevity, more frequent usage of the word or sentence etc.), the translation should recreate these features by usage of analogical means" (Fedorov, 2002: 234). I offer several examples from Dovlatov's texts that present some difficulties in the translation and transmission of the author's intentions.

3.2.1. Translation of you-formal and you-informal

As was previously mentioned, in Russian there are two personal pronouns for addressing a person either formally or informally. They are pronouns 'ты' and 'Вы'. It

could appear that it is easy to translate them as 'you' in English, but in Russian fiction 'ты' and 'Вы' often have important functions for understanding the text. If both 'ты' and 'Вы' are translated as you, the English text loses one very important aspect of communication between characters.

The Russian 'ты' and 'Вы' differ in their social status. 'Ты' is used to informally to address an intimate interlocutor, friend, or close relative, so the usage of 'ты' demonstrates friendly or intimate relations between speakers. Sometimes 'ты' indicates a person's low social status and can even be derogatory. 'Вы' is usually used to address an interlocutor politely, formally, to express respect to an older person or a person of a higher status, or simply a stranger.

Some strategies of translation of 'ты' and 'Вы' into English are described by Z. Proshina and M. Birdwood-Hedger (Proshina 1999: 106-108; Birdwood-Hedger). According to their studies, in some cases explicatory translation can be used to render the meaning of the Russian 'ты': Они говорили друг другу ты. – They spoke to each other like two old friends. Derogatory meaning of ты can be compensated by expressive means. For instance, 'Да вечно ли ты мне дорогу перебегать будешь? – Damn it… you're not always going to stand in my way, are you?' The English sentence expresses irritation and manifests the addressee's low social position, as it begins with a very emphatic interjection and ends in a tag-question (Proshina 1999: 107).

Birdwood-Hedger notes that in translating 'ты' and 'Вы' in Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina,* some translators add 'dear' for 'ты' and 'miss' for 'Вы.' Others use transliteration 'tui' and 'vui', while some use context to explain the situation. Omission is one further strategy that translators sometimes use.

Proshina also remarks that there are pragmatic differences between using English and Russian personal pronouns. "English, being an egocentric language, is speaker-centered; Russian is considered to be an "alter-egocentric" listener-centered language. Therefore, in English speech the pronoun 'I' occurs much more often than in Russian, so in translation it is frequently substituted by ты/вы: *How do **I** know this? – А как **вы** это докажете?*" (Proshina, 1999: 108).

It is also important to notice that in Russian the form of the accompanying verb also indicates formal or informal address.

In *The Suitcase,* there are two situations where characters switch from 'Вы' into 'ты' and both episodes are quite significant. They characterize the change in the characters' relations or specify the type of relations. In the first situation, the Dovlatov-character, being a student, needs money, and Fred, a businessman, offers to work together with him. The social and financial differences between the characters are obvious, and they are almost strangers, so the usage of 'Вы' would be appropriate. The fact that they start to use you-informal means that they are becoming accomplices and that they are both equally involved in the same illegal business. In this situation, explicatory translation could be used: the formal address with "comrade", or just surnames could be included and then the characters could switch to first names.

> [Фред] - *Берите* тачку и *езжайте* с ними по этому адресу... Мы, кажется, на *вы*?
>
> [Довлатов] - *На ты*, естественно, что за церемонии?
>
> [Фред] - *Бери* тачку и *езжай* по этому адресу. («Чемодан», 17)

[Fred] – Take (in form for you-formal) a cab and go with them to this address... We seem to use 'vy'?

[Dovlatov] – 'Ty', of course, what kind of formalities are that?

[Fred] – Take (in form for you-informal) a cab and go to this address.

The translator of *The Suitcase* decides to omit the difference between 'ты' and 'Вы'. In translation we read:

Take a cab and go with them to this address (*The Suitcase*, 12).

However, this passage could be translated differently with the use of a lexical means, such as:

"Comrade Dovlatov, take a cab and go with them to this address…It seems that we are on formal terms?"

"Of course not, why the formalities?"

"Ok, Sergey, take the cab and go to this address".

The second situation is similar. People start to work together, and the switch from 'Вы' into 'ты' indicates that they have no social barriers and that they are more friends than just colleagues:

[Шлиппенбах]: - Сейчас мы едем на Васильевский остров. Простите, мы *на вы*?

[Довлатов]: - *На ты*, естественно.

[Шлиппенбах]: - Едем на Васильевский остров. Там ждет нас Букина с машиной. («Чемодан», 145)

[Shlippenbakh] "We are going to Vasilyevsky Island now. I'm sorry, are we in formal terms?"

[Dovlatov] "Of course not."

[Shlippenbakh] "We are going to Vasil'evsky Island. Bukina is waiting for us with the van there."

As is seen in the translation below, the method of omission is chosen:

"We're going to Vasilyevsky Island now. Galina is waiting for us with the van" (*The Suitcase*, 118)

The distinction between ты and вы is also emphasized in the following episode in *The Invisible Book*:

- Идет война, - заметила мама уже не так резко, - настоящие мужчины гибнут на передовой, а некоторые гуляют в это время по бульвару и задают странные вопросы.

(Разговаривая с человеком, женщина может использовать округлое «вы», прямое «ты» и гадко изогнутое – «некоторые»). («Невидимая книга», 10)

"There is a war going on," mama noted but less sharply then before, "real men are perishing on the front line, and some people are walking at this time on the boulevards and asking strange questions".

(While talking to a man, a woman can use rounded 'vy', straight 'ty' and repulsively curved 'some')

In this example, the translator transliterates pronouns and provides an explanation in a footnote:

"There happens to be a war going on," noted Mama, but less sharply than before, "and while real men are perishing at the front, there are *some people* who stroll down boulevards asking funny questions."

(When conversing with a man, a woman can use the rounded "vy," and straight "ty," or the repulsively curved "nekotorye.")

(*The Invisible Book*, 16)

Footnote: "Ty" ("you," "thou") is the personal form of address; "vy" (you) is the standard polite form of address; and "nekotorye" ("some" people, "certain" people) is an impersonal, indefinite pronominal form that can, like its English equivalents, have disparaging connotations.

'Ты' is significant for another episode described in *The Invisible Book*. The Dovlatov-character worked in a publishing house and had friendly relations with its staff. However, when one of his manuscripts was taken by the KGB, some of his colleagues changed their attitude towards him. It was expressed through addressing Dovlatov with formal 'Вы' instead of 'ты' as they had done before:

Парторг говорит:

- В три часа *будьте* у редактора.

- Что такое?

- В три часа узнаете.

А ведь я был с ним *на ты*. («Невидимая книга», 67)

The party officer says, "Be (form for you-formal) at three o'clock in the editor's office"

"What's up?"

"You'll find out at three."

And incidentally, we used 'ty.'

The Party officer said:

"Be in the editor's office at three o'clock."

"What's up?"

"You'll find out at three."

And he and I were close friends. (*The Invisible Book*, 91)

In this example, formal addressing is expressed through verb-form used with 'Вы'. The Russian text specifies the type of address very clearly, and the author's note on 'being close friends' fits into the text very smoothly. However, because of the lack of the grammatical category in English, the translators must be very creative, and they attempt to express the meaning with the help of lexical means.

According to Catford, when a SL item at one linguistic level has a TL translation equivalent at a different level, a level-shift must occur in the translation. The translators compensate for the lack of a grammatical category of personal pronouns for you-formal and informal in English by lexical means.

As we can see, these three examples demonstrate different ways of overcoming difficulties in the translation of personal pronouns. From my point of view, footnotes or level-shifts are more appropriate strategies for translating of personal pronouns than is omission because the usage of this grammatical category is essential for the meaning of the text.

3.2.2. Translation of Derivatives

In spite of Baker's classification – which views morphemes as a part of a word and refers to words with diverse morphemes at a word level equivalence – this study views derivates at the level of grammatical equivalence. This is because word-formation systems are a part of grammar and the lack of derivate equivalents is caused by the difference in word-formation systems.

In Russian, the word-formation system is very developed: diverse suffixes and prefixes are widely used to form new words. Among others, suffixes are used to form animated feminine nouns from masculine. However, some of the feminine forms that indicate profession can be stylistically marked. They can be related to a conversational style (feminine nouns with suffixes –ikh, -sh) and have ironic or depreciative connotations (*Russkaia grammatika*[3]).

Dovlatov uses this type of feminine noun in his text '*гримерша.*' The Russian word '*гримерша,*' which is a female form originating from the word '*гример*' ('*makeup man*'), belongs to the common language and has a pejorative meaning in standard speech.

Dovlatov describes the situation when characters come to a film studio and meet a makeup person:

> ...и спустились на лифте к *гримеру*. Вернее к *гримерше* по имени Людмила Борисовна. («Чемодан», 144)
>
> *...and took the elevator down to makeup (man). To be more exact, to makeup (woman) named Ludmila Borisovna.*

[3] http://artefact.lib.ru/languages/russian/index1.html

In the translation by Bouis we read:

(…) and took the elevator down to makeup (*The Suitcase*, 117).

Bouis, instead of specifying a person, specifies a place; only later, in the next paragraph, does the translator define the gender of the makeup person:

"The makeup woman, Ludmila Alexandrovna..." (*The Suitcase*, 117)

Russian language has a variety of diminutive suffixes, and some of them can add other meanings to words. The suffix -ok can add negative connotation to the word. In *The Invisible Book* there is an example of such a word:

Подходит ко мне *дружок* из отдела быта, шепчет:

- Пиши заявление.

- Какое еще заявление?

- По собственному желанию.

- С чего бы это?

- Иначе тебя уволят за действия, несовместимые с престижем республиканской газеты. («Невидимая книга», 67)

A guy from Every Day Life Department comes to me, whispering:

- Write a request.

- What kind of request?

- That it is your own wish.

- Why?

- Otherwise you'll be fired for actions incompatible with the prestige of a republic newspaper.

'*Дружок*' has a slightly negative connotation and means that this person is not a sincere friend – he only pretends to give advice and to help. Later in the text Dovlatov notes:

(...) Так значит моего дружка подослали. («Невидимая книга», 70)

(...) Then my pal was secretly sent.

For this example the following translation is provided:

A friend from the Everyday Life Department came over to me and whispered:

"Write a statement."

"What kind of statement?"

"A voluntary statement."

"What for?"

"Otherwise they'll fire you for actions unbefitting the prestige of a newspaper of an autonomous republic." (*The Invisible Book*, 91)

For the most part, English readers understand the situation from the context, though Russian readers have an impression about that 'friend' much earlier, and this implication is transmitted through the formation of a new word by means of the suffix.

Thus in Dovlatov's text, it is important to find grammatical equivalents for categories that do not completely correspond in Russian and English, in particular personal pronouns and derivates. In Dovlatov's books, the use of these categories is important for the meaning of the text. Personal pronouns indicate a change in the tone of speech and in the relationships between characters. Meanwhile, the use of derivates determines the speaker's attitude towards another person.

3.3. Textual equivalence

Translators have to operate with lexical items and grammatical structures at various stages of the translation process. Nevertheless, translators must view the text as a whole during the entire process of translation. A text has organizational features that distinguish it from a non-text, and these features are language- and culture-specific. A text possesses connections within and among its sentences. Baker uses thematic and information structures, cohesion, coherence, and implicatures to help analyse the structure of a text.

Consequently, on the level of textual equivalence, a translator must decide how to transfer the texture and cohesion of the text. Textual equivalence allows for the transference of the ST's information dynamics. It involves the translator's ability to analyse sentences into themes, rhemes, and focally marked and unmarked elements.

Theme and rheme are two segments of a clause that help to explain the interactional organization of sentences. The theme is what the clause is about, and the rheme is what the speaker says about the theme. The rheme is the most important element in the structure of the clause as a message because it represents the information the speaker wants to convey to the listener.

The thematic choice is expressed by placing one of the sentence's elements in the initial position in the clause. Some choices are more meaningful than others, because they are more marked. As Baker notes, "the degree of markedness involved will depend on the frequency with which the element in question generally occurs in theme position and the extent to which it is normally mobile within the clause" (Baker, 1992: 130).

In a sentence, both theme and rheme can be marked. As Baker states after Hallidayan linguists, in English there are three main types of marked theme: fronted theme, predicated theme, and identifying theme. In spite of the fact that it is more difficult to mark rheme, there are times when a speaker/writer seems to be deliberately highlighting a rheme by stripping the message of its initial element, that is, the theme. In such cases thematic elements are omitted in order to foreground a rheme.

Thus, apart from being aware of the level of markedness of a given structure in the source and target languages, the translator should also learn to make use of the thematization devices available in each language.

As mentioned, Dovlatov's style is quite laconic. His prose is characterized by special tone of narration, and his syntax is very specific. May states that in Russian "the initial short sentences seem authoritative, suggesting a realistic scene, with logical author-narrator leading the reader along the landscape" (May, 1994: 137-138). Dovlatov uses very short sentences to create a special rhythm in the prose. His fragmentary division of narration uses contextually incomplete sentences, emphasizing the role of every particular word:

> Я чуть не зарыдал от жалости к себе. Ведь мне тридцать шесть лет. Восемнадцать из них я работаю. Что-то зарабатываю, покупаю. Владею, как мне представлялось, некоторой собственностью. *И в результате – один чемодан. Причем довольно скромного размера.*
>
> («Чемодан», 7-8)
>
> *I almost began to sob with self-pity. After all, I am thirty six years old. Eighteen of them I have been working. Earning something, buying.*

Owning, as I thought, some property. And the result – one suitcase. And of rather modest dimensions.

The theme of the last two sentences is 'the result', and the rheme is 'one suitcase,' 'and of rather modest dimensions.' The last two sentences could easily be combined into one. However, Dovlatov prefers to accentuate this small detail, presenting the rheme as a separate incomplete sentence. In translation we read:

> I almost wept with self-pity. After all, I was thirty-six years old. Had worked eighteen of them. I earned money, bought things with it. I owned a certain amount, it seemed to me. *And still I only needed one suitcase – and of rather modest dimensions at that.* (*The Suitcase*, 4).

Bouis decides to combine these sentences. However, this integration influences the perception of the text. Specifically, the rheme is not as highly marked in the translation as in the original text. Dovlatov expresses sorrow that after so many years of living and working he can pack all his belongings into one tiny suitcase. In Russian each detail is clearly emphasized, and the description is divided into short individual sentences. In the English translation details are presented in a smoother manner, without pause, and with different rhythm.

In order to facilitate the fluency of the text, Bouis sometimes combines two sentences with separate themes and rhemes into one complex sentence:

> Эта история произошла восемнадцать лет тому назад. Я был в ту пору студентом Ленинградского университета. («Чемодан», 11)
>
> *This happened eighteen years ago. I was a student at Leningrad University at that time.*

This happened eighteen years ago, when I was a student at Leningrad University. (*The Suitcase*, 7)

Nevertheless, quite often translators follow Dovlatov's syntax:

Мы проговорили около часа. Затем она попрощалась и вышла. Мне уже не хотелось редактировать воспоминания покорителя тундры. Я думал о нищете и богатстве. О жалкой и ранимой человеческой душе… («Чемодан», 95)

We spoke over an hour. Then she said goodbye and left. I no longer wanted to edit the memoirs of the conqueror of the tundra. I thought about poverty and wealth. About the pathetic and vulnerable human soul…

(*The Suitcase*, 77)

In this example, Dovlatov separates the rheme as an individual sentence again, and Bouis employs the same tool to make the narration more vivid and to intensify the effect of the passage. In the next example,

Тогда я достал чемодан. И раскрыл его. («Чемодан», 9)

Then I took out the suitcase. And opened it. (*The Suitcase*, 5)

the period between the two sentences is important for reflecting on the mood of the Dovlatov-character. It allows for the feeling of expectation – and maybe some trembling. It is a pause that is very short and very long at the same time.

Frydman also uses this strategy to mark the rheme in the same manner as Dovlatov:

По вечерам девушки танцуют, а днем работают. И неплохо работают. А в гости ходят к интересным людям. К журналистам, например…

(«Компромисс», 14)

Evenings the girls dance, days they work. And they don't work badly at all. And they go to visit interesting people. Journalists, for example.

(*The Compromise*, 13)

Лида опустилась на деревянную скамью. Сложила зонтик.

(«Компромисс», 51)

Lida sat down on a wooden seat. Folded her umbrella.

(*The Compromise*, 62)

Russian syntax differs from English in the way that it accepts sentences without verbs. The following example demonstrates how Dovlatov uses this type of sentence:

1960 год. Новая творческая волна. Рассказы, пошлые до изумления. Тема – одиночество. Неизменный антураж – вечеринка.

(«Невидимая книга», 15)

1960. A new wave of creativity. Amazingly banal stories. Their theme is loneliness. Parties all the time. (*The Invisible Book*, 23)

As we can see, the translators attempt to preserve the syntax of the original text even by breaking the rules of the TL.

An interesting example of sentence structure is presented in *The Invisible Book*. Here, Dovlatov manipulates Russian syntax as well:

Прошло 32 года. И вот однажды я читаю статью об Андрее Платонове. И выясняется. Что осенью сорок первого года. У него. В Уфе. Пропал чемодан с рукописями. («Невидимая книга», 10)

32 years passed. And once I am reading an article about Andei Platonov. And it turns out. That in autumn of forty-one. At him. In Ufa. The suitcase with manuscripts disappeared.

This type of sentence structure emphasizes the significance of the event. Dovlatov inserts full stops in unexpected places to force the reader to treat certain elements as complete units of information. The organization of the text makes every word essential, and makes the reader pay attention to every detail. It is also possible that Dovlatov imitates old silent movie subtitles, in order to stimulate readers' imagination and cause in their minds a bright picture of past events.

This example was translated as follows:

Thirty two years passed. Once I happened to be reading an article about Andrei Platonov. Everything suddenly became clear: in the fall of '41, in Ufa, he had lost a suitcase filled with manuscripts.

(*The Invisible Book*, 16)

The translator made a decision not to break syntactic rules of English. In addition to that, the sense of the paragraph has been distorted in translation: Platonov did not lose his suitcase, the suitcase disappeared.

As we can see, on the level of the textual equivalence, one of the most common difficulties is Dovlatov's syntax. The author tends to foreground particular details, singling them out as individual sentences. As the above examples demonstrate, all

translators – to a certain degree – try to maintain Dovlatov's syntax and attempt to preserve his style, even if it requires breaking the syntactic rules of the English language.

3.4. Pragmatic equivalence

As noted above, the challenge of pragmatic equivalence is to find resources in the TL that could have the same impact upon readers as does the ST. Conveying a national undertone, transmitting the "hidden" in the text, translating humour, and causing the same emotional reaction in the TT readers as in the ST readers, all of these are problematic when searching for pragmatic equivalents.

A peculiarity of Russian fiction stems from the country's historical and literary culture. For centuries, Russian writers had censors looking over their shoulders, and the censors, in turn, gave readers cause to scrutinize works closely for what might have been left unsaid.

Dovlatov's texts are full of cultural allusions and references. They are based on Soviet realities, stereotypical situations, and other attributes that possess value for a specific cultural group, in particular for people who lived in the Soviet epoch and who are very familiar with this period.

3.4.1. Culture-related references

In order to understand Dovlatov, it is necessary to be a part of the described cultural system. Readers must, in addition to possessing the knowledge of this epoch, also be aware of the emotional reactions.

Translating cultural issues occur even at the level of word equivalence (see above, pp.30-35). However, on a higher hierarchical level, the translation of cultural

issues is connected with the ST's and TT's effect upon the reader. Sharing a cultural background often helps Russian readers to understand the context of the situation without any additional explanations. For example,

> Шлиппенбах заглянул еще к одному приятелю. Тот выдал нам два черных ящика с аппаратурой. На этот раз – за деньги.
>
> - Сколько? – поинтересовался Шлиппенбах.
> - *Четыре двадцать*, - был ответ.
> - А мне говорили, что ты перешел на сухое вино.
> - И ты поверил?.. («Чемодан», 145)
>
> *Shlippenbakh dropped by to see one other pal. This one gave us two black boxes of equipment – for money this time.*
>
> *"How much?" Shlippenbakh asked.*
>
> *"Four twenty" was the answer.*
>
> *"I was told that you turned to dry wine"*
>
> *"And you believed that?"*

ST readers understand from the context that the numbers are the price of vodka, because of the popularity of the drink and the stable prices. However, the translator has to clarify the implication, and, in addition to that, Bouis specifies the prices in Russian currency:

> "*Four rubles twelve kopeks*" was the answer. The price of a bottle.
>
> "I heard you'd given up vodka"
>
> "You believed that?" (*The Suitcase*, 118]

In Dovlatov's books, readers will not find any detailed descriptions or authorial remarks on the characters. However, Dovlatov's characters are always talking, and their

numerous conversations help to reveal their nature. Every word they pronounce can uncover some of their traits and features. Any mistakes in their speech can be meaningful, and therefore it is important to reflect these mistakes in translation. For example,

> - Серега, извини! Я был не прав... Раскаиваюсь... Искренне раскаиваюсь... Действовал в состоянии *эффекта*...
>
> - *Аффекта*, - поправил его я.
>
> - Тем более...
>
> Чурилин осторожно шагнул в мою сторону. («Чемодан», 74)
>
> *"Seryoga, I'm sorry! I was wrong... I repent... Sincerely, I repent... I acted in a fit of effect... "*
>
> *"In a fit of passion", I corrected him.*
>
> *"Even more so... "*
>
> *Churilin took a careful step towards me.*

The problem with the translation of this passage lies in the similarity of the words '*эффект*,' which means 'effect' and '*аффект*,' which is used in the expression 'fit of passion.' These two words are confused by a military man who is not known for his intelligence. In order to translate this example, the translator is probably looking for an equivalent at word level first. However, the decision the translator must make is more complicated, because in the text two similar words with different meanings are used. Bouis applies omission to overcome this difficulty:

> "Seryoga, forgive me! I was wrong... I repent... Sincerely, I repent!" He took a careful step toward me." (*The Suitcase*, 59)

Another character's mistake in speech has political implications. The following dialogue takes place in an editorial office; the chief editor is looking for people of different nationalities from all Soviet Union republics to write an article and devote it to a Constitution Day. The editor tells Dovlatov that they have located an Uzbek and he discusses where they have found him.

- Где? Да на Кузнечном рынке. Торговал этой... как её... *хохломой*.

- Наверное, *пахлавой*?

- Ну, пахлавой, какая разница... А мелкий частник – это даже хорошо. («Чемодан», 50)

"Where? at Kuznechny Market. He sold this thing...what's it called... khokhloma."

"Maybe it was pakhlava?"

"OK, pakhlava, what is the difference... A private trader is even a good thing."

This situation is very significant. First of all, the editor is confusing two rather uncommon and closely sounding words: '*khokhloma*' and '*pakhlava*'; '*khokhloma*' is a type of Russian decorative tableware and '*pakhlava*' is an Asian pastry. In addition to that, in this episode the author touches upon a national question. In the Soviet Union, the question of national self-determination was very important. However, in the book, things appeared to be different, the editor does not comment on the question of national identity or self-determination.

This episode is translated by Bouis as

"Where? At Kuznechny Market. A small businessman. That's even good" (*The Suitcase*, 39)

A cultural allusion is made in the next example, but it is not revealed directly:

- Сфотографируют тебя, а потом на доску.. В смысле – «Они мешают нам жить...» («Чемодан», 152)

"They take your picture and then put it on the Board... I mean – "They impede our lives."

In the Russian text, the mention of the "board" evokes an association with the "Board of Honour," which was very popular in Soviet times and used to stimulate labour productivity. It is why the character has to specify which board he meant.

The following translation was offered by Bouis:

"They take your picture and then use you as a bad example, like 'Another troublemaker' (*The Suitcase*, 124).

The translation sounds smooth but the reference to the Board of Honour is lost. The translator only transfers the idea of being presented as bad example.

There are phrases in Russian that are pithy, popular, and that have their own connotations well known by every native speaker. The following example has this type of phrase:

Потом начнутся вечные журналистские разговоры, кто бездарный, кто талантливый, и довоенные пластинки, и слезы, и чудом купленная водка, и «*ты меня уважаешь?*» в финале.

(«Компромисс», 17)

Then eternal journalists' talks start, who is untalented, who is talented, and pre-war gramophone records, and tears, and miraculously bought vodka, and 'do you respect me?' at the end.

The phrase "do you respect me?" is one of great consequence in Russian culture; it touches on perceptions of honour, respect, and comradeship that are of primary importance during interpersonal connections. To drink with a colleague, friend, or even a stranger shows your willingness to develop a fellowship or a close affinity of mutual understanding. Bearing in mind that important business deals, contracts, or life-long friendships are often sealed with alcohol, the act of drinking with someone displays your respect for them. To refuse a drink would be disrespectful or even insulting. These concepts of insult, offence, and resentment are combined into one Russian word – обида. Thus, the phrase, "do you respect me?" is a visually rich concept in Russian, conjuring a scene of faithful comrades, joined under the influence, conscious of the intricate balance that honour, respect, and loss of face all play when refusing a glass of vodka in Russia.

Frydman translates this sentence without any changes or additional explanations and the translation hardly transfers the connotation:

> Then the eternal journalists' conversation begins, over who is ungifted, who is talented, followed by pre-war phonographs, and then tears, and the miraculously obtained vodka, and the "*Do you respect me*?" number as a finale. (*The Compromise*, 16)

The next example shows how the names of radio programmes reveal details of everyday life and people's attitude towards this life:

- А зря. Мы бы вместе слушали радио. Знаешь, какая моя любимая передача – «*Щедрый гектар*»! А твоя?

- А моя – «*Есть ли жизнь на других планетах?*»

- Не думаю, - вздыхала Хлопина, - и здесь-то жизнь собачья...

В эту минуту появился таинственный незнакомец. («Чемодан», 57)

"We would listen to the radio together. Do you know which programme is my favourite – 'A Lavish Hectare.' And yours?" "Mine is 'If Life on Other Planets Exists'." "I don't think so", sighed Khlopina, "Even here there is a dog's life..."

At that moment a mysterious stranger appeared.

The translator uses a strategy of omission:

"(...) we would listen to the radio together". At that moment a mysterious stranger appeared. (*The Suitcase*, 49)

Another cultural allusion used by Dovlatov in *The Compromise* is the quotation of a patriotic song, which is played at the meeting of former prisoners of fascist concentration camps:

Кто-то включил радиолу. Прозвучали мощные аккорды:

... Идет война народная,

Священная война... («Компромисс», 148)

It is a very famous song that causes an association with patriotic enthusiasm. However, even when the English translation transfers this episode, it does not create such an association for its readers, aside from the fact that the patriotic song contrasts with the people who attend the meeting:

Someone turned on the radio. Mighty chords rang out:

...The country is at war,

A sacred war... (*The Compromise*, 146)

Another cultural reference about a specific era is used in the next example:

Друзья кончали университеты, серьезно занимались филологией. Подхваченные теплым ветром начала шестидесятых годов, они интеллектуально расцвели. («Невидимая книга», 17)

This situation refers to a period of thaw in the USSR that is clear to Russian readers, but which needs clarification for English readers. The translators solve this problem using a footnote:

My friends were completing their education and were seriously involved in the study of philology. Caught up in the warm breezes of the early '60s, they had blossomed intellectually. (*The Invisible Book*, 26)

Footnote: "Warm breeze of the 60s" refers to the "literary thaw" that accompanied the speeding up of de-Stalinization associated with the 22nd Party Congress in 1962.

As we can see, there are many culturally specific words and phrases in Dovlatov's books. The author describes and mentions items that are difficult to understand if the reader does not belong to the author's culture. Appropriate perception of the text requires intimate familiarity with peculiarities of everyday life that seem so obvious and natural for Russian readers. Often these cultural connotations might appear untranslatable because it is not always enough to find a word equivalent in order to

transfer the meaning. This explains why, for example, Bouis often uses omission, or includes additional explanations in the text.

3.4.2. Humour

There is an opinion that Dovlatov's works start with an anecdote. According to Vlasova, anecdotes are at the core of Dovlatov's works (Vlasova, 2001: 8). Dovlatov transfers anecdotes from life into literature. His stories are almost always comical and originate from real-life situations. The humourous text based on an anecdote is unavoidably connected with the context of everyday life in the real Soviet world, and cannot exist outside of that context. The era when Dovlatov lived is vividly presented in his books, so in order to understand this reality and Dovlatov's humour, it is important to be familiar with this context.

M. Numano comments on Dovlatov's style and humour: "I understood that charm and strength of Dovlatov's anecdotes consist in their credibility. They describe real people ever more realistically than they appear to be, and readers willingly believe in the 'hyper real' truth" (In M. Amusin)[4].

N. Pakhomova says of Dovlatov's prose, "Material objects abound in the stories and seem to be stripped of symbolic weight. They are a necessity, an assemblage of props to support a theatrical reality. They frame the world in which the characters are exposed to the funny and absurd sides of life. The material world prevails over the spiritual world. [...] The style of the stories does not imply any deep intellectual discussion. The concrete material world is made to 'speak' in the text through a deliberate simplification of language and lack of sentiment" (Pakhomova, 2001: 68).

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[4] http://magazines.russ.ru/neva/2003/9/amus-pr.html

According to A. Vorontsova-Maralina, anecdotes in Dovlatov's books have two main functions: they serve as anecdotes in the traditional sense (a short account of an entertaining or interesting incident[5]) and as the core of the story's plot. In other words, anecdotes form the plot, genre, and situation (Vorontsova-Maralina, 2004: 16).

In this study, Dovlatov's humour is viewed on three levels: puns, traditional anecdotes, and anecdotes as the core of a story. It is necessary to mention that the translation of a pun starts with finding an equivalent at the word-level, but because of the meaning and the humorous impact of a pun upon the reader, it is viewed at the level of pragmatic equivalence.

3.4.2.1. Puns

The Oxford dictionary defines 'pun' as "the humorous use of a word to suggest different meanings, or of words of the same sound and different meanings." Another definition of pun describes it as "a form of speech play in which a word or phrase unexpectedly and simultaneously combines two unrelated meanings" (in Crespo: 231).

One strategy for dealing with puns, described in translation studies and mentioned by Newmark, is through the compensation of another pun at word level with a different but associated meaning. Newmark also considers that "where a pun is used in a SL text to illustrate a language, or a slip of the tongue, or the sense is more important than the witticism, it has to be transferred, translated and usually explained" (Newmark, 1988: 217).

In *The Suitcase* the following pun is used:

- Как ты?

[5] Oxford English Reference Dictionary

- На букву *Ха*, - отвечает, - в смысле *хорошо*... («Чемодан», 99).

"How are you?" "Starts with X", he answers, "I mean "хорошо" (good)."

In Russian, several obscenities start with *X*, so the first thought of the Russian reader is that the person is doing very badly. To express the quick-wittedness of the character, the translator has to be resourceful as well. In the published translation we read:

I ask, "How are you?" "Starts with *S*", he says, "*for swell*".

(*The Suitcase*, 80)

In this example, the translator maintained the contextual message of the text at the expense of the playful part of language. The translator substituted words in order to cause the same effect upon readers. However, an alternative translation for this example could be:

"How are you doing?" "Like a four letter F-word", he says, "I mean, Fine."

A similar way of translating puns is used by Frydman in *The Compromise*. The pun is:

Навстречу шла женщина в белом халате.

- Посторонним сюда нельзя.

- А потусторонним, - спрашиваю, - можно?

Медсестра замерла в недоумении. («Компромисс», 28)

A woman in white smock came toward me. "Unauthorized visitors are not permitted."

"How about authorized authors?" I asked.

The nurse froze in confusion. (*The Compromise*, 32)

The pun is based on the wordplay of посторонний 'stranger, unauthorized person' and потусторонний 'from another world'. The ST's reader may find this situation funny because 'another world' refers to a world with life after death, and the situation takes place at a hospital. Both words in the pun originate from the word '*сторона*' ('side'). The translator used the derivate, 'authorised,' which produces similar effect, but the translation does not produce a comical effect.

The translators of *The Invisible Book* prefer to translate puns with footnotes:

Умышленно задев меня пологим животом, он рявкнул:

- Писатель! Смотрите-ка – писатель! Да это же писатель! Писатель от слова ... «худо»! («Невидимая книга», 9)

Brushing against me on purpose with his gently-sloping stomach, he bellowed: "A writer! Just look at him – a writer, you say! Well, he's no writer! He's a writer from the word ... 'Bad'!" (*The Invisible Book*, 15)

Footnote: There is an untranslatable play on words in Tikhonov's remark which recalls a common derogatory statement used in regard to bad artists: "He's an artist (*khudo*zhnik) from the word 'bad' (*khudo*)!"

or

Личность Марамзина замечательно отразилась в его прозвище – «Карамзин эпохи маразма». («Невидимая книга», 23)

Maramzin's personality was beautifully reflected in his nickname – "The Karamzin of Marasmatic Epoch." (*The Invisible Book*, 34)

Footnote: The epithet, " Karamzin epokhi marazma," obviously based on an auditory pun, suggested that Maramzin was, like Nikolai Karamzin, the 18th centuary Sentimentalist writer, a culturally enlightened man, but one, however, who is living and writing in a pathologically diseased age. *Marazm* in colloquial usage means "idiotic delirium," "lonely chaos," and is often used to describe Soviet life.

3.4.2.2. Anecdote

Almost every situation Dovlatov includes in his books is an anecdote that makes Russian readers laugh. Dovlatov's anecdotes are witty and they often contain the author's apt remarks about human nature. An example is presented in *The Compromise*. Dovlatov is sent to write an article about the newly born, 400,000th inhabitant of the city. He is asked to come to a maternity house and choose the healthiest and best looking baby:

- Выберите лучшего. Подождите, время есть.

- Месяца четыре ждать придется. Раньше он вряд ли на человека будет похож. А кому и пятидесяти лет мало… («Компромисс», 25)

"Choose the best one. You can wait. There's time."

"We'd have to wait at least four months. Any earlier, it will hardly look human. Some people still don't after fifty years." (*The Compromise*, 27)

Some of Dovlatov's jokes require a familiarity with Soviet history, as does this example from *The Invisible Book*:

Звоню Воскобойникову:

- Надо бы повидаться.

- Сегодня никак. Еду в Разлив. Мы там дачу снимаем.

Я спросил:

- Комнату или шалаш?

Воскобойников трубку повесил… («Невидимая книга», 79)

I call up Voskoboinikov:

"We ought to get together."

"I can't today. I'm going to Razliv. We're renting a dacha there."

I ask:

"A room or a simple cabin?"

He hangs up… (*The Invisible Book*, 107)

This anecdote appears funny if readers are familiar with the place *Razliv*. It was a settlement not far from St. Petersburg, or Leningrad, where Lenin went into hiding before the revolution and lived there in a shack. This fact is very well known to Russians; additionally, there is a popular painting *Lenin v Razlive* (Lenin in Razliv). Therefore, for Russian readers, the place *Razliv* requires no explanation. The translator does not provide any comments on this anecdote and relies on readers' background knowledge.

Anecdotal situations can be found in *The Suitcase* as well. For example, Dovlatov describes the unveiling of statue of Lenin:

> Организовали торжественный митинг. Собралось тысячи полторы народу. Звучала патетическая музыка. Ораторы произносили речи. Памятник был накрыт серой тканью. И вот наступила решающая минута. [...] Музыка стихла. В наступившей тишине кто-то

засмеялся. Через минуту хохотала вся площадь. [...] Несчастный скульптор изваял две кепки. Одна покрывала голову вождя. Другую Ленин сжимал в кулаке. («Чемодан», 31)

A major rally was organized. About fifteen hundred people showed up. Solemn music played. Orators gave speeches. The statue was covered with grey cloth. And then the moment of truth. [...] The music stopped. In the ensuing silence someone laughed. A minute later, the whole crowed was laughing. [...] The poor sculptor had given Lenin two caps, one on the leader's head, the other one clutched in his fist. (*The Suitcase*, 23-24)

The situation does not present any particular linguistic difficulties for translation. There are no puns, no cultural references. However, the reaction of Russian readers can be more emotional. The point is that a monument to Lenin was placed in every city and in every regional centre. One of Lenin's most recognizable attributes was a cap. The sculptor had obviously overdone the task, so this situation also can be interpreted as caricature of the Soviet race to over-perform.

3.4.2.3. Anecdote-plots

Anecdotal stories are used as core plots for many chapters in *The Suitcase*. The book starts with a story about how Dovlatov got Finnish crepe socks. He was a poor student and desperately needed money. He was offered to participate in a blackmarket. However, the first operation he participated in failed. Dovlatov and his companions intended to sell Finnish crepe socks, but the Soviet industry started to produce the same type of socks just before they got rid of them.

A comical situation constitutes the plot of the chapter called "The Nomenclature Halfboots". The principle character of the chapter, Dovlatov, has been working as a sculptor's assistant on constructing a gigantic and hideous sculpture of the eighteenth century scholar Lomonosov for a new Leningrad subway station. When the work is finished, Dovlatov and the other workers are invited to the grand opening and a celebratory banquet. The crème de la crème of Leningrad attends, including the mayor, who seems oddly uncomfortable – his boots are too tight, and he surreptitiously takes them off under the table. Noticing the boots under the table Dovlatov pulls them aside, but is interrupted by an invitation for the group to preview the sculpture. As he hastily slips them into his friend's tote bag, normally reserved for their bottles of Stolichnaya, Dovlatov sees the Mayor nervously fumbling for his misplaced footwear. Not to be outdone by a potentially embarrassing situation, the mayor extricates himself by feigning sudden illness and heading for the nearest chesterfield. Everyone is hustled out of the banquet room while Dovlatov and his friends, rather than attend the rest of the opening ceremony, go out for a drink. Their only concern is that their badly mixed epoxy will not hold and the statue of Lomonosov will come crashing down on the assembled Leningrad elite.

This is an interesting and funny story. Nevertheless, readers might notice that not much happens in it. Dovlatov has stolen boots, and he is not caught, the mayor is not embarrassed, and the statue does not fall. The only consequence is that Dovlatov gains a pair of boots that he never wears.

Bolton attempts to explain why Dovlatov's stories are significant, even if nothing really occurs in them. In this analysis, Bolton uses Michel de Certeau's theory

of kairos and metis regarding everyday life. In this theory, metis stands for a form of practical intelligence that is allied to everyday "tactics" by its combination of "flair, sagacity, foresight, intellectual flexibility, deception, resourcefulness, vigilant watchfulness, a sense for opportunities, diverse source sorts of cleverness, and a great deal of acquired experience" (Bolton, 2001: 312-312). The application of metis results in "a particular kind story, in which character seizes just the right moment when the existing equilibrium can be knocked off balance by a slight tap" (Bolton, 2001: 313). Kairos is an occasion for opportunity. "Kairos is the chink in the system's armour, the seemingly trivial moment when a proper application of limited force can change everything" (Bolton, 2001: 313). According to de Certeau's theory, the art of metis creates stories by seizing the right moment when a whole system can be changed with minimal force, but the result is just a new equilibrium that can be changed in turn. According to this theory, in "The Nomenclature Half-Boots" Dovlatov depicts a kairoic moment that demonstrates the fragility and absurdity of the system.

Bolton suggests that Dovlatov's "kairotic narrative" is more like a mode of everyday existence, "a way we can conceptualize events and stories without requiring them to result in wholesale systematic change. It seems by its nature anecdotal and trivial" (Bolton, 2001: 314).

Many of Dovlatov's stories revolve around these kinds of metis and kairos. For example, one of the stories from *The Compromise* is about funerals. Dovlatov is sent to pick up a body at the morgue and is given the wrong corpse that of an accountant for a fishermen's cooperative. The mistake is not discovered until the ceremony is proceeding, but in spite of this the funeral goes on as scheduled; the accountant is buried

as if nothing had happened. Everyone pretends nothing is wrong, and that night the bodies are switched. The point of the story is to seize that moment when the system can be exposed in all its absurdity, even if nothing is changed.

Consequently, the effect generally produced by Dovlatov's stories is the demystification of official ideology. Many of his other stories demonstrate with good humour and wit that the regime is hopelessly divorced from reality.

Another situation that reveals the absurdity of the Soviet system constitutes the plot of "The Driving Gloves," the last chapter of *The Suitcase*. This situation is difficult to translate because it contains cultural and literaly references.

The action takes place in Leningrad, in the city founded by Peter the Great at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The plot of "The Driving Gloves" is that the editor of the Lenfilm's newspaper, Shlippenbakh, is going to make an amateur film about Peter the Great, who appears in Leningrad and is horrified by the changes he sees. Dovlatov is offered the main role in the film because of his height. Shlippenbakh is very fond of his idea and convinced that the film will be a resounding success in the country and abroad. Another reason why Shlippenbakh wants to shoot the film is that he is convinced his Swedish ancestors are mentioned in historical documents and in Pushkin's poem *Poltava*, where the war between Russia and Sweden, in the era of Peter the Great, is described.

> Он [Шлиппенбах] говорил, что его шведские предки упоминаются в исторических документах. Кроме того, Шлиппенбах носил в хозяйственной сумке однотомник Пушкина. «Полтава» была заложена конфетной оберткой.

- Читайте, - нервно говорил Шлиппенбах.

И, на дожидаясь реакции, лающим голосом выкрикивал:

Пальбой отбитые дружины,

Мешаясь, катятся во прах.

Уходит Розен сквозь теснины,

Сдается пылкий Шлиппенбах... («Чемодан», 137-138)

He [Shlippenbakh] asserted that his ancestors were mentioned in historical documents. Moreover, Shlippenbakh carried in his carrier bag an omnibus of Pushkin. He had marked the page in "Poltava" with a candy wrapper.

"Read, please" Shlippenbakh used to say nervously.

And not waiting for the reaction would screaming out with a barking voice:

Rebuffs from every quarter meeting,

The troops are strewn about the field;

Rosen goes through the pass, retreating,

And fiery Schlippenbakh must yield[6].

Kornil'tsev notes that Shlippenbakh was a real person, and he appeared to be a descendant of a noble Swedish family. By the way, Shlippenbakh was offended by this story and stated that everything had happened differently.[7]

In the translation, this episode is omitted, as is another mention of the Poltava battle, a decisive event in the Great Northern War won by Peter the Great:

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[6] Translated from Pushkin by Babette Deutsch.

[7] http://www.krasdin.ru/2000-3-4/s041.htm

Когда мы задом выезжали из подворотни, Шлиппенбах говорил:

- Ну и публика! Вот так народ! Я даже испугался. Это было что-то вроде...

- Полтавской битвы, - закончил я. («Чемодан», 154)

When we [Dovlatov, Shlippenbakh and Galina] passed through the gateway, Shlippenbakh said "Well! What an audience! What a people! It was like... "

"Like a Poltava battle!" I finished.

In the translation, instead of Shlippenbakh, the name Filimonov is used; so, in the TT, there are no references to history at all.

According to Tsiv'an, the chapter "The Driving Gloves" is the culmination of the novel. This is the most absurd situation of the entire book. The main character Dovlatov is walking in the centre of Leningrad dressed up as a tsar and no one pays any attention. This indifference reflects very clearly the Soviet era: no one is surprised, because people on an unconscious level are scared. They are used to not asking any questions and to be acting indifferent to what is happening. They fear that things will be worse for them if they express curiosity. The episode with Peter the Great and Shlippenbakh is significant. It stresses the absurdity of the events. Almost 300 years ago the Swedes were beating a hasty retreat in the face of Peter the Great. Now, as he passes by monuments and statues erected to reflect his greatness, he is being pursued and directed by the modern Shlippenbakh. This episode shows that the contemporary Soviet world is turned inside out and made senseless. The omission of this episode and the use

of the surname Filimonov instead of Shlippenbakh leads to the destruction of this cultural context and a misunderstanding of the story's meaning.

Thus, finding an equivalent at the pragmatic level is probably the most complicated task. The readers' reaction to the text is connected to their familiarity with the cultural context, i.e., with Soviet reality and Russian history.

Many situations from Dovlatov's books make Russian readers laugh. The difficulty in translating anecdotal situations consists in the readers' attitude towards what is written. Understanding humour requires a common ground where the interlocutor shares a history and a way to interpret experience with the reader. Humorous statements have their effect by referring to a store of shared knowledge and memories. Additionally, Russian readers feel more emotional involvement during the process of reading.

In the existing translations of Dovlatov, some cultural references and anecdotes are explained. However, many are omitted and left untranslatable.

4. CONCLUSION

It is not as easy to translate Dovlatov as it first appears. On the contrary, Dovlatov's unassuming simplicity requires a great deal of effort to be worthy of his style. Each sentence in Dovlatov's novels is as tight and to the point as Dovlatov could possibly make it, and there is no room for additions or elaborations of either syntax or overall forms. Dovlatov does not bother to explain his expertise – the reader understands the terms from the context. Thus, Dovlatov's style, which entails the necessity of understanding the context and belonging to the culture, makes Dovlatov difficult for translation.

Translators have to make a decision regarding what kind of equivalence is more suitable on several levels: on the word level, grammar level, and on textual and pragmatic level. The examples discussed demonstrate that cultural issues, proper names, abbreviations, slang, and obscenities can cause difficulties on the level of word equivalence. It is essential to find an equivalent for the translation of the personal pronouns you-formal and you-informal and derivates on the grammatical level. Syntax also is a grammatical category, but it is viewed on the level of textual equivalence, because Dovlatov's organization of sentences is very important for the fluency of the text and the connections between sentences, as well as being Dovlatov's method of highlighting key points. Nevertheless, what is more difficult, more interesting, and more important for Dovlatov's texts is the translation of diverse cultural connotations, references, and allusions that are not always familiar to English readers and that require explanations and clarifications from the translators.

In this study, examples of translation from three of Dovlatov's books were discussed. It appears that, even when the strategies used to deal with difficulties are similar, the way they are employed distinguishes one translation from another.

All translations have references to the source culture; for example, they have some Russian proper names, and they implement some cultural issues. However, Bouis tends to use a strategy of omission more often to overcome culturally determined difficulties. Frydman usually follows Dovlatov's text and does not apply any essential changes to the content, but neither does she provide very much in the way of explanation. O'Connor and Burgin, on the contrary, incorporate several footnotes in order to clarify and explain Dovlatov's text.

It is difficult to say which translation is better or worse, because every translator has different goals. The translation of *The Invisible Book* is more source-text oriented and Bouis's translation is more target-culture oriented. The translation of *The Invisible Book* explains and clarifies. *The Compromise* appeals to readers' background knowledge and *The Suitcase* does not overload readers with cultural references. However, in comparison to the Russian original, the translation of *The Suitcase* misses some of the specificity and humour of Dovlatov's style. On the other hand, constant footnotes complicate the reading process, but can be more appealing for those who study or are interested in Russian culture.

Mark Amusin remarks on the reality of Dovlatov's stories: "Dovlatov's purpose is not documentary but the feeling of reality. In his stories Dovlatov precisely transmits the life style and outlook of the generation of sixties."[8]

[8] http://www.cs.smith.edu/~aloutsen/Dovlatov.html

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